
MEMOIRS
OF
THE ANCIENT
HOUSE OF CLARENDON.



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HOUSE OF CLARENDON.

Romantic
A NOVEL.
X

I left no Business for this idle Trade.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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THE
ANCIENT HOUSE
OF
CLARENDON.

CHAP. I.

IN one of the most romantic parts of the County of Cumberland stood the Castle of Clarendon. Its noble possessor, the Baron, had early in life retired from the active scenes of the court; and, blessed with the valuable society of a consort he adored, endeavoured to banish from his mind the recollection of those circumstances that had led

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to

to the seclusion of so truly-honourable a family.

He had been married young, to a daughter and co-heiress of the noble House of Aumerle; and, in her right, enjoyed the possession of Clarendon-Castle; which, from some very particular reasons, he had been induced to make choice of for his residence.

The amiable Baroness, who was ever more happy to promote his wishes than her own, opposed not his plan of retirement; and after having lived in all the gaiety of the metropolis, for the space of about four years, they left the circles of pleasure amidst the pity and astonishment of their numerous acquaintance; some of whom kindly gave indirect hints that the Baron was actuated by motives of economy; and, as he had no doubt greatly exceeded his income, they thought him highly commendable

dable to retrieve it while he had the power. The younger ladies pitied the Baroness exceedingly, and wondered how she would be able to support so tedious an existence, while the gay cavaliers of the court thought the Baron an absolute tyrant, to bury in oblivion so much beauty and accomplishments; and wished (and, for once in their lives, it is probable they were sincere at least for the moment) that the lovely Baroness would seek protection from those who knew so much better how to value her attractions. While they, blest with each other and equally indifferent to the various conjectures their conduct might occasion, enjoyed a tranquillity of mind more enviable perhaps than all the splendor they had forsaken.

They had now past upwards of twenty years at Clarendon, without once during that period having paid one visit to the metropolis; and, though far removed from

the greater part of their former connections, and totally precluded from the smallest intercourse with all the elder branches of the Baron's family, they had never experienced, that greatest of all evils to a social mind, the want of elegant and agreeable society. For, the Baron did not profess to have quarreled with all mankind, though from some he had certainly received treatment sufficiently ill to make him suspicious of all.

Amongst those, who were particularly distinguished as familiar friends at the Castle, was Sir Hildebrand Fitz-Alvin and his lady, who had been the juvenile companions of the Baroness of Clarendon; and, on fixing her abode in Cumberland, they had recommenced an acquaintance equally valuable to both.

The Baron, who had forsaken the world more from anger than any particular attachment to solitude, was now long since become
reconciled

reconciled to his situation; and would have been perfectly happy, but for the painful recollection of times long past, which would, unbidden, sometimes intrude themselves into his thoughts.

His children, too, he wished to have been by this time more acquainted with the world; for, he very justly considered, that, however disgusted he himself might be with the treatment he had experienced in it, he had no right to seclude them.

Yet, on this subject, the worthy Baron ever appeared to be at war with himself; for, he never failed to oppose every plan that could possibly tend to increase their liberty; and, with regard to the females of his family, they could not possibly be more secluded than he wished them to be.

To this mode of conduct, all but one, from long custom, readily assented. But it

was no easy matter to convince the sprightly Maude of the propriety of the doctrine. It is true she was contented, for, contented she would always be, if it were possible; and, as she well knew there was but little reason to entertain hopes of emerging at present, she made herself perfectly happy in believing, that the time would most undoubtedly arrive, when some knight would snatch her from the gloomy confines of this ancient mansion. Yet, as that desirable event might be far distant, Maude was determined to enjoy the blessings she already had in her power, and the dance, the song, or any other amusement in the Castle, were sure to find a leader if Maude was called on.

The second daughter of the Baron, the beautiful Editha of Clarendon, was, if possible, more lovely than her sister; but her beauty was of another description. Her complexion was fair as fancy ever formed
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the Cyprian goddess; her hair, which flowed profusely over her shoulders, was of the most perfect gold colour, and now and then a wanton ringlet would wander from the band of pearls that bound her snowy forehead. She was now just seventeen, and her figure, in every respect, formed according to the most exact rules of proportion. She was not so tall as Maude, yet there was something in the persons of both which seemed to say, had they been different to what they were, neither had been so perfect. It was true, as Maude observed, she could have been as well pleased if Editha had not been so handsome. But, as she admired none who was not, like herself, of a meek and unassuming temper, and never interfered in her projects of making conquests, the girl was endurable; nay, she would, with all her heart, have confided to her her hopes and fears and the gallant things that were said to her. For Maude seldom walked the terrace of the Castle that

a young knight passed without turning for a second look : on these occasions her heart was delighted. If, on the contrary, it should happen some unconscious knight passed on regardless, it disturbed not Maude ; for, she was sure he must be affianced to some one before he saw her ; in which case, she would have deemed his attention an insult ; or he must be under the power of some necromancer, who had purposely blinded him to her attractions, that he might not be induced to carry her off before the right knight arrived, who was to free her from the Castle, and carry her to court ; where they should appear in tilts and tournaments the wonder and the admiration of all their acquaintance. On these occasional reveries, which were by no means unfrequent, she would seek for Editha, to communicate her thoughts to her. To be sure, Editha was not the person in the world she would have chosen for a confidant ; but Maude had no choice, and taciturnity was no gift of hers. Editha would
rest

rest upon her harp, and listen to these wonders, till the smile would involuntarily become a laugh, and Maude was half offended; for, in her opinion, nothing could possibly demand more serious attention. Editha would again become attentive, and deliberate upon the necessary method of conduct to be observed, should any of these renowned gentlemen again make their appearances. And, these preliminaries once adjusted; Maude would trip lightly away in quest of some new thought or project, or perhaps to seek the soothsayer, that seldom passed the gate without being consulted, and in the veracity of whose prognostications, no fair maid in the whole county of Cumberland had a more implicit faith than the lively Maude of Clarendon. While the gentle Editha would lament the volatility of her gay sister's heart; yet, owning to herself she was to be envied, she would again resume her harp; or, slinging it across her shoulder, wander alone to the rocks that

overhung the sea, at about half a mile distant from the Castle. There she would sit and sing to the soft tones her hand called forth, till, answered by the melancholy echo of her own notes, joined to the dashing of the waves beneath, she scarcely dared to turn her head behind her, or assume courage sufficient to descend, till the sprightly voice of Maude would sound through the apertures in the rock, and call her to join the dance in the ancient hall of her ancestors.

But Maude came not alone, Albert De Clare, their cousin, who loved not his father's house with half the fervency he loved his uncle's, seldom failed to become her companion when she went to seek Editha. Maude's eyes would sparkle with pleasure when she found her sister, for she generally entertained an idea of necromancers having spirited her away in a whirlwind, or some other of their numerous conveyances; and Editha would secretly rejoice in having found

found some companions to assist her through the rugged paths she had wandered into; and Albert, though he took every precaution to conceal his emotion, would sometimes unintentionally betray the pleasure he felt in being their protector.

Yet, for the world he would not have had it supposed he had a particular regard for either of them; and an indifferent observer would have supposed he scarce regarded them with civility. Sometimes, it is true, he would call Maude Editha. But what of that? He always remembered the next day to call Editha Maude. Albert was the pattern of all forgetfulness, and was always too much absorbed in study to notice or mean any thing.

The Baron would sometimes wonder at the absence of mind he saw in his nephew; and, fancying he might not be happy at home, gave him a general invitation to his

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mansion.

manſion. To render it the more agreeable to him, he requeſted the Baroneſs to aſſign him proper apartments, to be always at his own diſpoſal.

The Baroneſs of Clarendon loved her nephew too well to oppoſe this plan; yet ſhe could not help obſerving to her huſband, that it was her opinion Albert's melancholy had ariſen from an attachment to one of her daughters. For, that he had an attachment he made no ſcruple to avow; yet, ſo myſteriouſly did he conceal who this wonderful idol was, that every one fancied it to be a different perſon.

The Baron thought as his lady did; but, admitting it were ſo, he ſaw no ill that could poſſibly ariſe from it. He was worthy, and they were amiable. "Indeed," added he, "how can they be otherwiſe than deſerving of each other; he is your nephew, my dear Gertrude, and they your daughters?"

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— The eyes of the Baronefs glistened with the tear of gratitude to a beloved husband, but she could not forbear remarking there was some difference of fortune; and, though she herself had little value for the gifts of that frail goddess, yet it occurred to her as a reason never to make any connection, between Albert De Clare and a daughter of the house of Clarendon, without pointing out to the Baron the disparity of Albert's fortune. —

“ It is true,” replied the Baron in answer, “ Albert is not rich; but his house is ancient and illustrious, and himself truly honourable. We have enough for them; and his being the youngest son can be no objection to me, who am one myself. To you, my Gertrude, I am sure it is not; for you daily prove you have not repented taking me, and I have given you but too much reason.” — “ Never!” said the Baronefs. “ On the contrary, the misfortunes, which have too often clouded the brow of Clarendon, have afforded me the

the supreme pleasure of exerting my endeavours to dispel them. But adieu, my good lord; when husbands will be so very unfashionable as to flatter wives almost twenty years after their youth is flown, our sex would incur the imputation of being singularly unfashionable should they listen to them."

The Baroness descended into the hall, and found her lovely family engaged in following the mazes of the dance. The domestics, such whose occupations would admit of it, always joined in these private dances; and, though the Baroness was never familiar, she so well knew how to conciliate their affection, that her presence never disturbed any one; they all respectfully saluted her at her entrance, and continued their amusements as usual.

As soon as the dance was finished, Albert De Clare quitted the hand of the fair Editha, who

who had been his partner all the evening, and taking that of the Baroness, led her to the top of the hall. Lady Clarendon had remarked the very apparent indifference with which he had resigned her daughter, and, had it been any other lady, would have deemed it incumbent on herself to have refused him; nay, had it been the humblest of her domestics whom he had left thus rudely, she would have done the same; but pride, upon the present occasion, withheld her speech, and she was affable as usual.

When the dance was concluded, Albert conducted the Lady Clarendon back to her sofa, where the Baron was seated by his eldest daughter. "My dear Editha," said she, "can you pardon my breach of politeness in robbing you of your partner? but caprice is sometimes absolutely irresistible.

"To

“ To that alone, madam,” she replied, “ I believe the whole of the affair is to be attributed, but let me beg you will not give yourself the trouble to apologize where there is no occasion: for,” added she with a smile, “ I am an idle spectator more from choice than necessity, for Edmund offered me his hand, which I was on the point of accepting, but there was no possibility of resisting that mad-cap sister of mine, who came up at the instant, and insisted on having him herself by right of eldership, and, by the same title, you, madam, had certainly a better claim than I had to my cousin Albert.”

The Baron gravely remarked, “ That he was glad his daughter had so well studied the lessons of humility as to yield so coolly to reason.” — “ Coolly indeed my Lord!” said Albert De Clare, and the unbidden sigh burst from his agitated bosom.

bosom.—Now the reader is to know that this same Edmund, who could so easily have the choice of beauties for whom even princes might have been proud to contend, was no other than the old grey-headed steward of their father, and had been, in the same capacity, the servant of their grandfather. He might not perhaps at this time be above seventy or seventy-two, yet Albert was vexed to hear that Editha spoke of him as one with whom she should have been well contented to have supplied his place, and was most completely mortified that his scheme had taken the effect he had designed it for, namely, to convince his fair cousin that he did not dance with her so much from choice as civility.

For this reason he had left her to take her mother; and, though on the rack lest she should be engaged to another in the mean time, had delayed to ask her for his partner till her elder sister was engaged

gaged with one who would dance longer, and consequently suited her better than himself.

The Baron had remarked the sigh that escaped Albert, and was in secret revolving some method of dispelling the gloom that imperceptibly had begun to spread over the faces of this little party ; but Albert, wishing to expiate the offence, which it gave him pleasure as well as pain to see he had created, asked her, in a careless way, as he hung over the back of the sofa, if she would join the dance again ; yet, fearful of being supposed to care about it, he added, “ that Maude was coming, and would want her seat ;” and Editha, who saw he was unhappy, though ignorant of the cause, very readily consented, for she supposed him embarrassed by the late conversation, and wished to convince him she was no longer offended : but, alas ! in her good wishes to restore him to tranquillity, Editha was not destined

destined to be successful; for, this ready acquiescence with his proposal had more effectually distressed Albert than even her story of old Edmund; for, so strongly is the human heart disposed to caprice, and Albert's was perhaps as much or rather more so than many, that he had flattered himself she would refuse his offer: had she done that, he would then have flattered himself she was piqued; but, this coolness, this undesired good-humour, what could he attribute it to, but to indifference. It was insupportable; the displeasure of Editha was misery to Albert, but her scorn was death. He had ever been most sincerely attached to both his cousins, but his love for Editha had ever been unbounded.

“ For her alone he lov'd, and lov'd her from a child.”

What then, you will say, prevented his declaring his passion to her, who was always anxious to assist him in the attainment

tainment of his wishes? Was it his inferiority of fortune that he feared would be a bar to his hopes? — No: too well did he know her sentiments on that subject to entertain even a momentary doubt of their being actuated by avarice. Was it then a fear of a refusal that induced him to bury in silence a passion which, if divulged, might perhaps have insured his future happiness? — No: he knew her heart so prone to pity, that he could not fear disdain from the gentle daughter of Clarendon. But, alas! that pity, which her gentle nature led her to bestow on all whom she believed unhappy, determined Albert to keep the knowledge of his love to himself.

He saw with joy that she treated him with all the warmth of the most unreserved esteem and cordial friendship; but this was not sufficient to insure the happiness of Albert. He must be loved, and he formed the absurd resolution, never to tell his love
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to Editha till he could be certain he possess the first place in her heart; for he could not endure the idea of being indebted for her hand to the cold dictates of compassion; and thus did he, in pursuit of his inconsistent plan, pass the gay hours of his youth in needless vexations; for, his supposed neglects and wilful offences, which were sometimes the effect of design and often of absence of mind, failed not to excite the anger of the fair ladies of the Castle, and consequently their retaliation. Maude would rally him till he has often been reduced almost to confession; and Editha smiled at the absent air with which he replied to her questions, till he was obliged to leave the party to preserve the secret.

But it is time we should become something better acquainted with the other branch of the Baron's family.

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The young Walter Clarendon was not second in courage and accomplishments to any, even the most elegant young men of the time ; and in personal beauty, joined to a graceful and commanding figure, few were his equals. He had very early evinced a particular attachment to the study of war-like accomplishments ; and, being destined to the profession of arms, both by the wishes of his noble father and his own choice, he had past the last three years at the mansion of the Earl of Shrewsbury, for the better opportunity of attaining the knowledge he sought ; for it was by no means unfrequent, for the noblemen of that period, to permit the sons of their friends to partake of the education of their own, from a supposition that many being together excites in their bosoms a desire of emulation ; and, in return for this favour, the youths generally performed some military service for their patron, during the time they resided with him. From the retired life which the

Baron

Baron had so long followed, he did not wish for such a society at Clarendon; besides, as he had daughters, it might have been attended with some degree of inconvenience. For these reasons, he had preferred sending Walter to his old friend, the Earl of Shrewsbury, to any other; for his heart delighted in war and every thing appertaining to it, and never was so happy as when surrounded by the young and future champions of his sovereign's glory. And, from his mansion, on the coast of Devonshire, Walter was now almost every day expected with impatience; but better perhaps would it have been for the happiness of many if this so much desired return had been destined by heaven never to take place.

One evening, when the gloominess of the weather had every thing forlorn and comfortless, the Baron proposed, to his daughters, to enliven the hours by one of their frequent family dances, and declared
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his readiness to be one of their party. Little hesitation ensued, the minstrel of the Castle tuned his harp to the enlivening notes of gaiety, and melancholy was no more. Not long had they been thus engaged, when a violent storm arose that filled their hearts with terror. The tremendous thunder rolled awful and almost incessantly above their heads, and seemed to threaten instant and inevitable destruction. A stop was directly put to the entertainment, for no one had courage or inclination to pursue it farther, and each sat trembling by the side of their partner in gloomy and profound silence, while the red lightning continued to flash through the large painted casements of the oaken hall. From this stupor they were suddenly aroused by the shrill sound of a traveller's horn, accompanied by a loud knocking at the Castle-gate; and, as the traveller, whatever was his rank, never failed to gain admittance at the Castle of Clarendon, all were eager to be the first
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to give entrance to the supposed stranger. The gates were soon unclosed, but it was no stranger that presented himself, but their fellow-servant Jasper, who had been the first of the family that had emigrated during the space of some five-and-twenty years, and then on no less an occasion than to attend young Walter to Devonshire.

They were all rejoiced at his return; and, not doubting but that he came to announce his master, without staying to inquire into that particular, they immediately went to inform the Baron that he was arrived.

Nothing could possibly exceed the pleasure he felt at this intelligence, except his disappointment when the good Jasper was obliged to say he came alone. He had been ordered to follow his young Lord on the second day after his departure from Lord Shrewsbury's, and to join him at the seat

of a friend, at the distance of fifty miles from Clarendon-Castle, where he proposed to pass the intermediate time; but that, on arriving at Bently-Abbey, he found his master and his companions gone from thence, but as to whither they were gone he could obtain no information; and, in consequence of finding it impossible to follow him, and being totally ignorant of Walter's pleasure as to his disposal, he had taken the liberty to return home, as he called it, and intreated to be again received in the service of his honoured old master the Baron, from whom it was easy to perceive he would never wish to depart to follow the young one.

The Baron very readily granted his request, but it was not without pain that he observed the very little regard that his old servant evidently felt for Walter; for in vain did Jasper endeavour to conceal his indifference; the poor fellow's joy was so
unbounded

unbounded at being once more to serve the Baron, that, in defiance of the respect that he had ever felt for every branch of Clarendon, he could not conceal the little regret he felt at quitting his master.

Lord and Lady Clarendon were never weary of asking him questions concerning their son; to many of which he pleaded ignorance, for he could not answer as he wished to have done, and there was no other method to avoid giving them perhaps more pain than pleasure, but from some obscure intelligence that he had picked up on his journey.

He informed them that a party of young noblemen had hired a vessel at a port a few miles distant from Bently-Abbey, and it was thought that Walter might probably be one of the party; but of that particular he was uncertain, nor could he, after all possible inquiry, obtain any infor-

mation as to the destination; for the people either were ignorant on that head, or they affected to be so, in all that he could arrive at the knowledge of.

Lord Clarendon could not help regarding the conduct of his son as being very extraordinary, and, in his opinion, not a little disrespectful; for who, that had not seen his native home and dearest relations for the space of above three years, would have delayed his return in so unnecessary a manner? Neither did this intelligence convey much pleasure to the feeling heart of the Baroness. Blest with but one son, she regarded him as the peculiar gift of heaven, nor could misfortune ever appear to her in so formidable a point of view as when it threatened to involve this favoured object of her fondest wishes. She did not doubt but that the noblemen whom Jasper spoke of were some of the companions of her son, and that he had embarked with them; but, though sensible
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on all other subjects, the Baroneſs was weak on this, and was much more diſpleaſed with his friends for aſking him to be of their party than with him for conſenting; but when ſhe thought of the ſtorm to which he was probably expoſed, the terrors that oppreſſed her were more than ſhe was able to ſupport; and, at the repeated entreaties of the Baron, who juſtly was alarmed at the perturbation which it was eaſy to perceive ſhe ſuffered, (for it was in vain that ſhe attempted to conceal it,) ſhe reluctantly conſented to retire. But the young ladies, who had been for ſome time in deep and ſecret conſultation, declared unaniſouſly their intention of paſſing the night in the hall, as they could not think of retiring to reſt in ſo violent and tempeſtuous a night.

The Baroneſs remarked, that, though they might not ſleep, they would certainly be at leaſt as comfortable in their
C 3 chambers;

chambers; but Maude protested she dared not venture to pass the long gallery that led to her apartment, for every body knew that it was past twelve, and, if ever ghosts were out, they were out then, for Father Austin himself had told her so.

“ Then Father Austin was to blame,” replied the Baroness.

“ Holy Mary !” said Maude, with a look of astonishment, for she had never before heard such an assertion, and, had it now been made by any other person, it is more than probable, she would have flatly contradicted it. “ But prithee my good girl,” said the Baron, “ why is that passage worse than all the others in the Castle ? Come, Editha, confess, for I suppose you are in the secret.”

“ Because it leads to the north gallery, my Lord.”

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The Baron started, and, with visible distress, turned away in silence, while Lady Clarendon seemed to regard him with great concern, and expressed her displeasure that her daughters should give way to so great a weakness, and wondered what could possibly have put such ideas in their heads; but the Baron, who had by this time again recovered his usual tranquillity, and happened, for once, to comprehend the meaning of Maude, which indeed it much more frequently happened that he did not, said, with a smile, that, if they were disposed to break their rest to gratify their curiosity, they should have his free leave, and he hoped they would see the ghost, or rather the spirit, they expected, and which, to say the truth, he did partly expect himself.

The Baroness did not quite so clearly understand all this, for she was indeed too

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much

much disturbed to attend to it, yet she could not help being surprised that he should countenance ideas that had once created so much disturbance in the Castle. The Baron desired his daughters would not fail to give him notice if any thing appeared, which they faithfully promised, and he led the Lady Clarendon from the hall, preceded by attendants, in all the state, though perhaps not all the pride, of ancient days.

It may perhaps be a matter of wonder that Lord Clarendon should so readily assent to Maude's belief of spirits, but the truth is, that the Baron did not, on that occasion, suspect her of believing it herself, but he understood that she, like himself, attributed the delay of Walter's return either to some accident or a wish to surprise them, by coming when he was least expected, and doubted not but a few hours would bring him, if well, to the Castle;

Castle; if it did not, he determined, in the morning, to leave no means unattempted to gain intelligence. But Lord Clarendon had not discovered this similitude of opinion by art of magic, for Maude, fearful of not carrying her point of watching in the hall, had communicated her thoughts to her father for the sake of gaining him over to her side of the argument, and he agreed that it was certainly most proper not to acquaint the Baroness with their ideas, fearful lest it should determine her to sit up, in expectation of what might probably end in disappointment. The fair sisters had at first entertained strong fears that they should not succeed in carrying their project into execution, and they knew that to confess the truth would have determined Lady Clarendon to follow their example, as the probability of Walter's arrival would have appeared in the same light to her as it did to themselves.

To our improved understandings it may seem, perhaps, that a great deal more ceremony was made use of on this occasion than was necessary, but we must recollect that the fair ladies, of those unenlightened times, as rarely pass their nights out of their beds, as those, of our polished days, pass their nights in them; and, unless on some very extraordinary occasion, such as the ball, the banquet, or the tournament, of some neighbouring nobleman, it had never been the custom of Clarendon-Castle; and, as a reason of some sort was indispensably necessary, Maude had, as she thought, very fortunately hit upon her story of the haunted gallery; for the Baron had consented, and she was happy: but Maude foresaw not the confusion to which her thoughtless speech was destined to give birth; nor was Editha less delighted than herself, for she loved her brother as well, and would have been severely mortified had she not enjoyed the
pleasure

pleasure of waiting for his coming; yet she confessed the argument that Maude had made use of would never have occurred to her, but wished she had not spoke so lightly of the reverend Father Austin. Of the enormity of this offence Maude was not, however, so easily to be convinced, and, without debating any more about it, they both began to prepare to array themselves for the rest of the night, for it was miserably cold, and the old hall echoed to the tempestuous wind, that seemed almost to shake the battlements, that had hitherto frowned defiance to the all-ravaging hand of time.

All such of the domestics as were present begged they might be permitted to set up with their young ladies, and they as readily agreed to it; for if their servants loved them well enough to wish to break their rest to wait on them, it never entered their heads that they were conferring any

very great favour, by permitting them to do what they would probably have been afraid to have done without.

CHAP.

C H A P. II.

SOON after Lady Clarendon had left the hall, the ladies retired to the adjoining parlour to change their dress for one more warm and comfortable, which their young maid Amable had brought thither, that they might not disturb the Baroness by passing backwards and forwards in the way to their apartments. Old Edmund was busily employed in seeing the hearth replenished with plenty of logs, that they might not experience the intense coldness of the weather, and every one was sedulously exert-

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ing themselves for the accommodation of their beloved mistresses; but, as it very frequently happens, where there is little to do and many to do it, some of the domestics had found time to communicate to each other their sentiments on Lady Maude's fears, and the present face of things at the Castle, amongst some other very suspicious and alarming appearances, was, first and foremost, the extraordinary delay of their young Lord's return, which was soon by one and all allowed to be the joint work of witchcraft and evil spirits. Secondly, Jasper had arrived in a violent storm, and such a storm as they were sure had never before been known in Cumberland; and it had, doubtless, been raised, the more effectually to prevent his making any attempt to follow his master; and for what could all this mischief befall the family, but for a certain transaction that had taken place in the Castle some years since; but, though they all hinted that

that the Baron was the cause, no one chose explicitly to say so.

Now it most unfortunately happened that Amable, at this very interesting and alarming crisis, entered the upper end of the hall of council, in her way to the parlour, with something she had most unwillingly been to fetch for the ladies from their apartments; not that Amable thought any trouble too great that she could do for them, but she too had heard her mistress assert that the Castle was haunted, and, in her great haste to return, had forgotten something more than half she went for, and had now just returned with trembling steps from this her second embassy; and as she took great care to walk uncommonly light, lest any of these aerial gentry, or other such persons, should chance to hear her and impede her, she had descended the stairs unheard, but not, alas! unseen; for she was clothed in a long white Joseph, which Editha had made her put on for
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the night, and her face, from her own fears, was whiter and worse than all. In her right hand she carried a candle.

Now every reasonable person must acknowledge, that the appearance of any thing in white, in an old Gothic hall, an hour after midnight, even though it should have proved nothing more than the old family house-dog, that had unexpectedly entered at the moment that they were crowded round the fire to talk of apparitions, would have been more than sufficient to fill the boldest of the party with dismay, and that it was perfectly right to suppose it came with some very evil intention, and make way for it with all convenient speed; but, alas! it so happened, that the farther the debating-party continued to retreat, the nearer did this tantalizing and inquisitive spright continue to advance; for the spirit of curiosity was gone forth in the family, and as it had always been poor Amable's misfortune to possess a very reasonable
sonable

sonable share of this inestimable talent, without which, many a very precious piece of scandal had never come to light, or cheered the liberal hearts of the inquiring multitude; so it did now fall out, that Amable, whose head was as full of ghosts, hobgoblins, and what not of that sort, as any other person's, felt, on the present occasion, this same curiosity increase and multiply, till it became, as it were, ten-fold. For some minutes she gazed in silent wonder on the affrighted faces of the party assembled; but as it had never occurred to her, that she was gifted with a face to frighten any living being, because the mirror of her mistress had told her so, and she, as well as her mistress, was inclined to believe it was the mirror of truth: it, therefore, never once struck her, that it could be herself they fled from.

Finding, however, that they resolutely continued to preserve a strict silence, she at last assumed courage to accost them in the accustomed

accustomed solemn phrase, and asked, in the name of the Holy Virgin, if they had seen it? Some few of them, encouraged by this pious interrogation, now ventured to look more steadily at her than they had hitherto deemed it safe to do, and one of these was the venerable old housekeeper, Dame Margaret, who, to her infinite surprise, beheld in this tremendous being, who had filled her heart with terror, no more formidable a spirit than her daughter Amable, who was, indeed, in general, one of the merriest spirits in the Castle: but her presence had now created sensations so widely different from mirth, that they really knew her not; nay, even after she had acknowledged herself to be herself, it was some considerable time before any one was willing to acknowledge the truth of the assertion, because, in the first place, every one felt a strong reluctance to owning he had been mistaken; and, secondly, they were so strongly prepossessed that her appearance was something

something truly terrible, that they were scarcely yet convinced that they should not incur the danger of being demolished, if they let her approach them. To be sure they did partly begin to think it was Amable, but they were, nevertheless, certain, that they had seen something, and from her inquiry if they had seen it, they were perfectly convinced Amable had been frightened, for her countenance plainly betrayed it; and what but having met an apparition playing his antics on the great stairs, or in the gallery, could have made her suppose they had seen any thing, if she had not seen it come that way; and it was, therefore, in consideration of these suspicious circumstances, agreed, that she had certainly seen something as well as themselves, and truly, for my own part, I know not any reason why it might not be so, for I verily believe it was as likely that one should see the ghost as the other.

Amable

Amable had executed the commission she had been sent on with all possible dispatch; for the idea of a supernatural being following at her heels had so resolutely kept the place in her heart, that she had permitted it to take, (things they say will not always go out of the head or heart either, when they are bid,) that she firmly believed she heard footsteps follow her at every step she took, and, perceiving that some people were talking by the fire, she had stopped to talk a little, merely to recruit her spirits, but how well she succeeded we shall soon have an opportunity to remark.

Things were in this position, when a servant came to say, that the young ladies had been for some time wanting Amable. What was to be done? It is true the parlour they were in was no farther than at the bottom of the hall, but to the bottom of the
hall

hall, nor half so far now she had heard more, Amable dared not venture.

A motion was made together, it was a comfortable method certainly in such an emergency ; but, alas ! it could not be, for their long conversation, that destructive enemy of expedition, had so long detained them, that now, and not till now, they began to discover, that the only things they had to do were left unaccomplished. What then could be done ? The ladies began, no doubt, to grow impatient, and it was universally agreed, that Amable must go to them. To this she reluctantly assented, and said, she would go directly, if Gilbert would go with her to the door, for she was afraid to go alone, and Gilbert plainly indicated, by the frequent turn of his head, to see that nothing was behind him during their progress, that he, though ashamed to own it, was partly of the same opinion.

The

The ladies soon after entered the hall and seated themselves by the hearth, where they were too earnestly employed in talking of the dangers to which they feared their absent brother might be exposed, to remark, for some time, that the domestics, who now began slowly to assemble, always came in pairs; but at last Maude, whose thoughts seldom rested long on the same object, began at last to remark the very visible consternation that reigned predominant in every face around them, and inquired the cause of it.

No one answered.

She repeated her question.

One said, she only looked ill because she was cold; at the same time, she cast her eyes behind her, as if fearful of being chastised for a falsehood, though her teeth,
chattering

chattering in her head, gave ample credit to the assertion; another was really frightened to think of his good young master being exposed, in so dreadful a night, to the merciless tempest; and a third was crying because she had the tooth-ache; in short, every body had a reason, and every reason given was as far as possible from the truth; and Maude, though she did not believe them, knew not to what other cause to attribute this unaccountable consternation, for she had never once imagined, that it arose from what she had said was her motive for sitting up, nor considered that as they did not know, that she really had any other than the one she mentioned, that it was perfectly natural they should believe it, it was certain that she had, when once it was excited, full as much fear upon this subject as any of them, nor was her fair sister in the least behind-hand with her, which was soon discovered; for Editha, over desirous of making every person comfortable whom fortune placed

ced within the limits of her power, desired, as they were not well, and had been all much alarmed by the tempest, that one of the domestics would fetch some wine and cakes; and, for those who might chance to like more substantial food, the ham was not forgotten; and at the same time bring her harp, for, as the Castle had been built, literally speaking, "according to the fashion of the times," there was scarcely a possibility of her disturbing those who were retired to repose, as, from the multitudes of passages and long galleries of which there was really no deficiency, it was very unlikely that they should be heard. But this proposal, which might reasonably be supposed to meet with gratitude and thanks, seemed destined to excite sentiments perfectly the contrary; and, as she had named no person in particular to be the messenger, no person was solicitous to perform it.

A general hesitation ensued: Edmund told Gilbert to go to the cellar; but Gilbert, with much respect, thought, if he pleased, that Master Edmund had better go himself, seeing as he understood things better than he did, who was but a humble serving-man belike.

Editha, who did not understand all the meaning of this argument, inquired what was the matter; and, on being informed, reproved Gilbert for wishing so old a man to go while he sat idle; and he declared he would go with him, but he could not go alone. Editha looked displeased, for her commands were very seldom unreasonable, and she was but little accustomed to be disobeyed. She desired there might be no more dispute about it; but Gilbert should go, and some other person with him; who, as they dared no longer delay, prudently engaged a third, in secret, to

be of their party in case of danger ; while old Edmund, who felt ashamed not to serve his Lady, went with them also. “ God preserve them ! ” said one of the most sedate of the Baroness’s gentlewomen, with great energy. — “ Amen ! ” said Amable, and looked wistfully after them, as the sound of their steps died away at the lower end of the hall.

“ Why is the door left open, Amable ? ” said Maude : “ it is extremely cold.”

“ They will make haste back, madam ; but, perhaps, Edmund may be less afraid than if it was shut.”

“ Less afraid ! ”

“ Yes, madam.”

“ I do not, I believe, understand you. Edmund afraid to walk the Castle ? Gilbert

too seemed alarmed: what is it that they fear?"

"Nothing, I believe madam:" and she cast an anxious look on their departing shadows as they faintly gleamed on a distant wall, while all the rest of the females sat trembling in silence, lest she should betray the secret, they had themselves found it so difficult to keep.

"Nothing!" repeated Maude, "certainly, Amable, you do not attend to what you say. Has any thing happened to Edmund? Is he ill? If so, why is he here to night? We would not for the world he should have sat up: he shall retire immediately. The Baron will, I am sure, be much displeased with us: you should have told us!" —

"Dear madam, pardon me, he is not ill I believe; only he is — he — he his —"

"What is he?" "Very old, madam, and — and — he is frightened."

“ I do not understand your method of answering, and shall make my inquiries of somebody that is inclined to be a little more attentive,” said Maude. — Editha looked no better pleased, but said nothing, being determined to inquire of Edmund himself, from whom, she flattered herself, she should receive a more satisfactory account; and, as one of their maids had fetched the harp, she took it on her lap, and began to sing “ Of Royal Edward’s glorious deeds.” But hardly could she be said to have soothed the listeners into attention, ere a violent gale of wind, that seemed to threaten universal desolation, burst through the windings of the Castle; the doors and casements snapped, and a loud and tremendous noise, as of something of considerable force, making its approach, filled every heart with dread. In a moment was heard a loud and dismal cry, and Amable, uttering a shriek, fell flat at the feet of her mistress. Another gust of
wind

wind was heard; and, as it died away, still they distinguished the accents of some one in distress; but who should dare to go in search of them. Every person, that enjoyed a sufficient portion of reason, of which indeed the number was but few, endeavoured, by listening with attention, to discover from whence it proceeded, and at last found, that the sound came up the passage, through which the servants had lately past; and Editha said she was almost certain it was the voice of Edmund, and she would go to see what could occasion him to be in such distress, not doubting, from the groans she heard, and what Amable had said, that he was dying. Maude declared she would go with her, for he had served them ever since they could remember, and, from his own goodness of heart and gentleness of manners, they regarded him almost as one of the family. But Amable, just now beginning to recover, called for her immediate attention; and, as

she had recovered sense enough to understand what they were talking of, and hearing their determination to go, she, in the most earnest tone of supplication, entreated them to desist, alleging, that she was sure the ghost would seize them too. Maude looked alarmed! "Good Amable, compose yourself, you are safe, you will soon be better." — "Ah, madam, do not mind me, but, in the name of heaven, do not leave the hall, think of the ghost, and fear to be used like poor Edmund."

"Poor girl," said Editha, "something has certainly disturbed her brain, I thought her very odd just now: do you know what it is she means, good Jasper."

"Yes, madam. No; no, madam. I — I — I — I do not know any thing about it, but I believe, that is, I think, God forgive us all, I think, madam, she has seen something to night."

"O!

“ O! Holy Mary be our guard!” said Editha, as she kissed her bead-roll: “ that is, what has alarmed poor Edmund, then? let us go directly in search of him.”

“ My good Editha,” cried the trembling Maude, “ let me intreat you not to think of doing any thing so desperate. What assistance could we possibly afford him against a ghost?” “ I know not that,” replied Editha, “ but I will certainly go. Amable cannot be left: you shall stay with her. — Jasper, dare you go with me?” Small was the inclination he felt for this honor; for Jasper had, in his heart, some little smattering of the coward: but found that all his insinuations of danger were ineffectual in shaking the resolution of his fair mistress, and that she was about to depart alone. Upon this very undesirable expedition, he very courageously took up the lamp, and proceeded before his lady to the passage; but, at the entrance,

very respectfully drew back to let her pass him, being himself but little desirous of encountering the attack of any thing they might meet; and besides, as he observed, with great deference, he could, in that case, better preserve the light: while Editha, being, to use an out-of-the-way phrase, too much frightened to fear any thing, passed on without attending to his very judicious remarks.

After following the sound for some time, which they now discovered, instead of one, to be many voices, they at length came to a turning in the passage, where Editha stumbled over something that lay in the path, and, upon Jasper's holding down the lamp, they discovered it to be Gregory, who, in wandering about, had lost himself, and lay stupified with fear. They raised him up: but, as he was not sufficiently come to himself to give a clear account of his companions, they were obliged to leave him, and
go

go in search of them, whom it was not long before they discovered in utter darkness, and almost bereft of their senses. As soon as they recovered the use of speech, they informed their lady, though with infinite respect, for fear of offending her, that the Castle was certainly haunted, for that as Gilbert was going into one of the cellars, just as he had opened the door, a great spirit shut it in his face, with such violence, as to knock him down, and at the same time passed him with great violence, and put the lamp out. His fall had occasioned those, who were as close as possible behind him, to share the same fate; for they had taken hold of hands, to inspire them with courage, and were very solemnly protesting to stand by one-another at the moment of the shock: but Gregory, who was the hindmost, had run away, and lost himself in trying to return to the hall. They had heard his lamentations, and not in the least doubting, but this invisible spirit was pu-

nishing his temerity, they would not, in all probability, have ventured to follow him till daylight, having a most sincere belief, that, at the dawn of morning, all such unwished-for visitors lost the power of doing mischief.

Editha was soon as completely terrified as themselves; for, though she had never before thought much about it, she recollected, that, in her infancy, she had heard something of the same kind; but that, at the command of the Baron, the story had gradually died away; that is, it no longer reached his hearing. But it was by far too precious a theme to be forgotten by the tenants and domestics, who often talked of it in secret, and took particular care that the rising generation should, from frequent repetition, be so well versed in the history, as to hand it safely down to future posterity. Still, however, these affairs had, for fear of giving offence, been conducted with a great degree
of

of caution : but the recent alarm had put them so completely off their guard, that even the presence of the ladies could not restrain their speech ; and every one, forgetful of the consequences that might ensue, began to relate all they had ever heard, or fancied they had seen, after being once more assembled round the fire, and having all partaken of some refreshment to restore their spirits.

Editha, to banish uncomfortable ideas, once more attempted to beguile the hours with harmony, but the attempt was in vain ; her fingers trembled on the strings, and the harp was once more set aside. Yet something must be done, to fill up the hours till daylight ; and Editha requested, that Jasper would recount the adventures of his young master. Every person present was equally desirous to hear it, and Jasper, to their general satisfaction, complied.

Scarce was his tale concluded, before the conversation turned again on the adventure that had befallen Edmund in the passage; and many a dismal anecdote was told, of ghosts that danced, by moonlight, on the battlements. In one of the most interesting of these entertaining stories, a violent and sudden crash was heard, and when, after a considerable time, they ventured to look round them, they discovered, that the great folding-doors of the library were burst wide open, and he, who had courage to approach the nearest, declared he saw a figure, all in white, standing on the opposite side of the room; and so sincerely did his auditors believe him, that very few amongst them dared approach for their more immediate conviction; and those who did, declared they saw it skipping about, and that sometimes it came close to them, and then vanished in a moment. Nobody chose to continue long near the door, but kept close
to

to each other, and forebore again to speak of spirits ; only Amable whispered to her mistress, that to be sure every body knew the north gallery was haunted, but she never knew before that the rest of the Castle was so.

Maude started, for she recollected that it had been shut up even before she could remember, and that so scrupulously, that she had never seen the inside of the apartments, or even a door of them unfastened : once too she had inquired of her mother the reason of this mystery, but was commanded never again to repeat the question. At another time the ladies had asked for a part of them to be added to the rooms allotted to their use, but the Baroness had assigned them a part of Walter's, without giving any reason why she did not choose to favor them with those they had requested. All these suspicious occurrences put together raised
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in the bosom of Maude so many fears, that she, whose spirits were wont to inspire every one with courage, was now more terrified than even her timid sister: and even the thoughtless Amable stole to the cushion by the sofa of her mistress, where alone she seemed to think herself in any degree of safety.

Every one now impatiently looked for the approach of morning, the great clock on the Castle had beat four, and they derived some small degree of comfort from thinking that in another hour all would be stirring in the Castle. Some few had, in spite of their fears, fallen asleep, and others were beginning to prepare for breakfast, and Editha and Maude had almost talked each other into tolerable composure, though they failed not to keep a watchful eye on the doors of the library, which nobody had ventured to approach near enough to close.

Suddenly

Suddenly the doors, at the head of the great stairs, cracked on their hinges, and the figure of a man appeared descending. Editha, who beheld him, screamed aloud, and fainted in the arms of her sister, who was almost in the same condition, for they recollected not the Baron, who stood in silent astonishment at this so extraordinary reception.—Now the reader is to know, that this great stair-case led on one side immediately to the north side of the Castle, and that was now regarded as the spot that contained some mystery too terrible to bear investigation. They had, on the first appearance of the Baron, imagined him to be some departed spirit that had been disturbed by their conversation. Perceiving that their alarm seemed to increase as he advanced, he stopped and spoke to his daughters, who, after a short time, recollecting his voice, rejoiced that he was once more with them, and seemed to think
his

his presence a certain protection from every danger.

Lord Clarendon had heard the loud report occasioned by the bursting open of the library-doors, and thought it was the gates of the Castle. This idea created a hope that Walter was arrived, for on no other business, did he suppose, they would have been opened at such an hour. He had past near two hours in the momentary expectation of being sent for; and, thinking his family were unwilling to disturb him, had long wished to go in the hall to inquire, but the fear of disturbing the Baroness had prevented him. Unable, however, any longer to endure this suspense, he had, at length, determined to rise, and, having entertained so strong a persuasion of beholding his son, his disappointment was proportionably great, and he immediately mentioned his intention of leaving the Castle to make all possible inquiries concerning

concerning him, as he could no longer doubt but some very severe misfortune must have befallen him ; for which purpose he desired that his attendants might be called and his horses prepared.

During breakfast, the Baron accidentally asked what had occasioned the noise that had disturbed him, and was soon informed of all the terrors of the night, nor was the spectre in the library forgotten. The Baron disbelieved it, but said he would look for it himself, and, taking the lamp, walked towards the door : but the Baron, like many other people, did not enjoy the gift of thinking of more things than one at a time, and he was just then so completely occupied in thinking that they who told this surprising tale were mistaken, that he never thought he was standing before the light of the lamp he carried, and, accordingly, without hesitation, he declared he could see nothing ; and of the truth of his
assertion

assertion there can indeed be little doubt, for the library was immensely large, had dark brown flooring, and was adorned with few other decorations than family pictures and large oaken presses; added to this, the hangings, what little of them were visible, consisted of dark green damask fringed with gold, and the window-curtains of the same materials were decorated at the top with very heavy ornaments of carved oak. In such an apartment as this it is certainly probable not much could have been distinguished by the help of one lamp, whose feeble rays were more than half extinguished by the grey dawn of morning, that just began to gleam on the massy pillars of the hall.

Lord Clarendon, perfectly satisfied that the fears of his family alone had formed the phantom, and telling them, which was certainly the case, that it was the wind only that had forced the doors open, was
returning

returning to his breakfast, when he suddenly exclaimed, he saw something move, but, by the sudden movement of the hand, the beams of his lamp were again obstructed, and every thing again invisible.

“ I surely saw it ! ” said the Baron.

“ O, Holy St. Mary ! ” cried the pale Editha, “ then it must be true ; for if he acknowledged that the Castle was disturbed, there could no longer be a shadow of doubt.”

“ I will examine the apartment more narrowly,” said the Baron ; “ but, lest accident deprive us of our light, bring me more lamps, and guard the door.” He drew his dagger from his belt, and was on the point of entering, but the united entreaties of his children to desist, to which were added the prayers of his domestics, vanquished his resolution ; for, though the Baron was a man
of

of a very extensive understanding and liberal sentiments, he was not so totally divested of the dark prejudices of the times, as wholly to disbelieve the existence of a supernatural agency, a belief that was, at that period, so universally prevalent, that those, who had ventured to dispute it, would have fallen under the suspicion of being a very immoral and irreligious person. For some years the Baron had not received so severe a shock to his feelings; he was convinced that his family had not been alarmed without reason, though he, no more than they, had not yet discovered that this alarm was very innocently created by nothing more than a large stone bust, that occupied a niche, facing the door of the library; and, had he not yielded to the wishes of his daughters, he must certainly have discovered it, and the terror of the mind would consequently have yielded to conviction. But the Baron contented himself with making fast the doors, and commanding that nobody

body should presume to enter till his return, when he would take the opinion of Father Austin concerning them.

And in good truth he had little cause to doubt but his orders would be faithfully obeyed, as none of them ever chose to go even on that side of the hall, when they could find a possible pretence to avoid it.

The servant soon after entered, to say the horses were at the gate; and the Baron arose to depart. He commended his daughters to the protection of Heaven, and bade them remember him kindly to the Baroness, whom he hoped to see in the evening; for, should any thing occur to require his absence from the Castle, he certainly should return to take leave of her.

The ladies attended him without the Castle gates; and, as they followed with their eyes the departing steps of the Baron and
his

his attendants, they perceived at a distance a heap of ruins, that appeared to have fallen during the night; and, as it was now broad day-light, and their fears had naturally vanished with the night, they proposed to walk and examine from whence they came; for they doubted not but the tempestuousness of the night must have occasioned much mischief.

Their conjectures proved to be founded in reason, for the north wing of the Castle had suffered greatly from the storm, and one of the turrets, near their own apartments, was almost demolished; nor had the humble cottage of the peasant escaped in security. The observation filled them with the most melancholy reflections, and even Maude was silent; but it was no property of her's to be so long, and she at last broke silence, by simply remarking, that all the mischief appeared to have been confined to the north gallery; and, had she studied for

a week, she could never have hit upon a more unfortunate subject, for Editha was secretly reflecting on the same observation. They both regarded this similitude of sentiment as being ominous, and concluded their conversation by a fixed determination to let no opportunity pass unnoticed, of exploring the mystery that appeared to be attached to that part of the Castle.

CHAP.

C H A P. III.

THEY now re-entered the Castle, where things began to bear a much more agreeable aspect than when they had left it. The sun, which was now perfectly risen, shone bright and beautifully on the painted casements, the morning had settled into a clear frost, and the large fires burnt cheerfully in the hall, where many of the children of the vassals was assembled, to partake of the breakfast that was always open to their access.

The

The Baroness was just risen, and was expected very soon to enter the crimson gallery to breakfast, and thither did Maude and Editha immediately repair to meet her: where drawing their cushions close to the glowing hearth, and impatiently waited her entrance.

“ I wish,” said Editha, “ that Albert de Clare had been here, he might have gone with the Baron.”

“ But I am sure he would not have gone with the Baron,” replied Maude: “ for, not to please King Henry himself, would Albert subject himself to the smallest inconvenience ; and that I am certain a cold morning always is to my very entertaining cousin Albert.”

“ But at least he would have been company to us, Maude ; for his apartments are near

ours, and they would be less melancholy if we had somebody near us."

The remark struck Maude as being true, and she sincerely joined in wishing he was at the Castle; though, by way of protector, she thought not much of Albert; not that she doubted either his courage or his wish to serve them, but she well knew that the fear of being supposed to concern himself about them would render him a very indifferent companion. In the middle of this dialogue, the door opened, and in fauntered the gentleman they were wishing for. They both sincerely loved their cousin, and rose to meet him with joy. "Dear Albert," said Editha, as her fair hand was extended towards him, "you never could have come in better time; the Baroness is breaking her heart at the unaccountable absence of Walter, and my father is just departed to inquire for him; but I beg your pardon, you are standing; take my seat by the fire."

"I

“ I know he is !” said Albert, and carelessly threw aside his cloak, while, without appearing to notice her offer, he seated himself on the contrary side.

“ You know he is !” repeated Maude. Now, cousin, you are returned in one of your absent fits again, for I would venture a mark, that you know nothing about him or of what Editha was saying to you: and, for once, Maude was right; for, most unfortunately for Albert, Editha had prefaced her story with the epithet of dear Albert, which had produced such a wonderful effect on Albert’s ideas, which were generally employed on all that Editha said, that it had rather confused his understanding; and the remark, which really was occasioned by nothing but the absence of his manner, had rather tended to increase than diminish it; for, knowing her to be not a little satirical, he feared she had discovered his love, and

was laughing at him: the bare supposition of which had so disturbed him, that it was with some degree of difficulty he explained, that, having that morning in his way to the Castle met with the Baron, and offered to accompany him, he had been informed of the affliction of the family, and hastened to join them.

At this moment the Baroness entered the apartment; she was glad to see Albert, for she regarded him as next to Walter. Maude informed her of the Baron's departure, of which her women had given her but an imperfect account; and, recollecting the conversation of the preceding evening, she expressed her astonishment at their weakness in believing the Castle to be haunted.

Maude did not think there was any thing so absurd in it; but she forbore to dispute the point, and contented herself with telling the true reason that had induced them to
fit

fit up. The Baroness felt all the kindness of their conduct, and endeavoured to reward them by appearing as cheerful as she could. Albert too was pleasanter than common; and Maude told her sister, as soon as he had left the room, that she was sure he was in love with her, and would grow agreeable if she would but marry him; and, in the gaiety of her heart, she forgot, or pretended to forget, that the Baroness was of the party; but she smiled at the lively sallies of her fair daughter's tongue, and asked if Albert had engaged her for his advocate.

But the observation so heedlessly made produced on the part of the Baroness a very scrupulous attention to the conduct of her young family. Editha had ever openly confessed a most sincere regard for Albert, but there was nothing in that regard which might not have been bestowed upon an amiable brother. Her services were ever at his command, nor did she wish to conceal

the interest she took in his welfare ; and any thing that gave cause of uneasiness to Albert never failed to call forth all the exertions of Editha, till he was made happy.

The sentiments of young De Clare was not indeed so open to inspection ; yet, from the penetrating observations of Lady Clarendon, he could not long conceal the interest he felt for Editha. But still there was a mystery more difficult to be comprehended ; for the attention he bestowed on Maude was not inferior ; and if he loved a daughter of her house, why did he not avow it ?

If the Baroness had a failing, it certainly was pride ; but the error, if it were one, arose not from the heart. She had, from her earliest youth, been educated in the idea of never deviating from the dignity of her rank : the noble family from which she was descended was of the most unfulled honour, nor was the one into which she was married
less

less distinguished, and she deemed it an absolute impossibility, that any one could look on an alliance with the House of Clarendon with an eye of indifference; yet to what other cause could she attribute the conduct of her nephew?

Her conjectures were, no doubt, founded on reason; yet the Baroness was, perhaps, never farther from the truth, which an event that soon after took place clearly demonstrated.

About noon a messenger arrived from the Baron, to signify that he should return early in the afternoon to the Castle, and that he had heard of Walter, who would not however, he believed, accompany him: but the ladies were more perplexed by this information, which, literally speaking, informed them of nothing more than they knew before, and they counted the hours with impatience till the arrival of the Baron.

At about the hour of six he entered the Castle, escorted by a numerous band of attendants, who, as they looked through the loop-holes over the grand entrance, they discovered to be some of the military vassals of a neighbouring chief. Editha was alarmed, for she feared, seeing him followed by strangers, that some accident had befallen the Baron. Maude had never thought of that, for she had seen a couple of young cavaliers, and, though the glance was but a transient one, she was certain they were elegant, and promised herself, from their arrival, some adventure worthy of note. The Baron alighted from his steed, and the strangers appeared about to depart, at least Maude thought so, and her spirits sunk in proportion. "Then they will not enter the Castle! Dear me, how provoking! Surely the Baron will not suffer the cavaliers to depart without refreshments, madam?" and she turned to address the Baroness, but the Baroness

roness was not there. The idea of a compliment paid to the Baron by some whom she imagined to be strangers, not only called for her gratitude, but for her thanks, and she immediately descended into the court, to entreat the entrance of the courteous strangers, and pay her compliments in person.

Maude sincerely wished her mother might be a successful advocate, and her eyes again involuntarily were turned to the loop-holes: and Editha, assured that no danger had befallen the Baron, was stationed by her side, admiring with equal encomiums the graceful deportment of the visitors. They had not long indulged their contemplations, before they had the satisfaction to behold them alight from their steeds, and follow the Baron as he led the Lady Clarendon back into the Castle.

Numerous were the conjectures that the fair maids formed during the hour they con-

tinued at the Castle ; they had flattered themselves that Walter might be of the party, but they were now certain that they had been mistaken, as they should, no doubt, by this time have heard of it.

In the middle of these doubts and fears they heard the footsteps of Albert de Clare descending to the hall, whither the Baron had sent to request his company, and in his way thither had occasion to pass the apartment they were in, and returned but very laconic answers to the innumerable inquiries with which they were severally pleased to favour him. As to who the gentlemen were, indeed, he knew not, nor could he say he cared ; but, as they seemed so deeply interested, he wished the Baron had sent for one of them instead ; for his part, it would have pleased him much better to have continued reading. “ All malice ! ” replied Maude ; “ you know now you would have been miserable if he had, for somebody might

might have looked at either me or Editha."

"Looked at Editha!" said Albert, with emotion.

"Aye, why not?"

"Indeed I know not any reason to the contrary; but I must go, the Baron will think me tedious, fare ye well!"

"Aye, farewell to you, strange discontented animal!"

"Good Maude, who do you speak of?" said Editha. "Why, of that unaccountable being that is just departed."

"What, Albert!"

"Yes, I verily believe that he thinks being in love with one, a sufficient reason for being uncivil to all other women."

“Why, who is he in love with? surely you cannot be entrusted with what is a secret to all the world, the lady’s name, unless indeed —” and Editha hesitated, attempted to go on, hesitated again, and, at last, made a full stop, looking with an inquiring smile in the face of her sister.

“Unless what?” said Maude, impatiently, turning her head over her shoulder as she was quitting the apartment, to resume her station at the loop-hole.

“Unless you are the lady, for otherwise I think you would not be in the secret; but if so, I sincerely wish you joy, for happy will be the destiny of her, that is the chosen favourite of my amiable cousin De Clare.” “Poor Albert!” said Maude, and she looked more grave than if she had lost her prettiest necklace; nay, she even neglected

ed to look from the casement, though the horses began to move in the court.

“ Why do you pity him, Maude? is he not happy?”

“ He never will be happy, if Editha can really wish him so with any but herself.” (The colour rose on the fair cheek of Editha.) “ You are always talking nonsense, Maude.” — “ It will happen so sometimes, Editha, but as that is likely to be an evil hard to cure it is not worth attempting, but at present I am serious.” Had Maude been so fortunate as to have lived in our enlightened days, she might have added,

“ How long to be so, heaven alone can tell!”

But Maude did not enjoy the supreme felicity of quoting tragedy, though, in the dialogues of the time, she was an adept, and she was, therefore, for lack of this knowledge,

knowledge, obliged to confess, in plain English, that he had never told her this important piece of intelligence concerning the state of his affections, but that she had discovered it long since from his actions, and daily observation continued to confirm the idea. "And, I profess," added she, "I see no harm in his loving you, Editha, though, to be sure, it is an ill compliment to my attractions; but, even that, by far the most provoking thing, you know, that could have occurred, I would be content to overlook, and would be his confidant, his advocate, his any thing, on the occasion, if he would but be honest, and not vainly attempt to be a keeper of secrets, for which, with all his philosophy, he has not abilities. But, mercy on us, perhaps I am accusing the poor youth of what he does not deserve, and it may be you that play the hypocrite!"

Editha

Editha protested, we do not say how sincerely, that she had never entertained an idea of his being partial to herself or her sister; "For if," said she, "he ever by chance shews any attention to either of us, I have often observed it was most frequently to you, Maude."

"True, so it is, and therefore do I think he cares not for me; but I am glad, however, to see you are piqued by this supposed affront. Albert, if he knew it, might be proud of it, but he (the good saints help him!) is too considerate to be happy: but rest assured, Editha, it is not me he loves."

"I believe, Maude, you could talk for ever! do you not hear the strangers are departing?"

"Well

“ Well never mind them, we saw them as they entered, and shall, most likely, never see them again.”

“ But we may as well go to the casement.”

“ No, I am sure Albert will be grieved if he should see us looking at them.”

“ You had not used, Maude, to be so attentive to his wishes.”

“ True, sister, in that particular you have hitherto been far before me ; but I see how things are going, you despise Albert now my brother is returning home, and intend to make conquests by the score amongst his gay companions : but be advised, Editha, leave those thoughtless knights to me, and be content with Albert.”

“ Prithee,

“ Prithee, Maude, come along, they will be gone.”

“ Alas! poor De Clare, she loves thee not, or she would not be so desirous of contemplating these unknown youths.”

The sisters had, indeed, for once in their lives, changed characters; for Editha almost flew to the casement, while Maude, who was always in haste, walked slowly after her, pitying her gentle cousin: for though they often wrangled, she most sincerely, as a friend, loved Albert, and had long since observed the attachment that he had borne to her sister, even from their childhood. She too plainly perceived, by the indifference of Editha, the pain that he was doomed to feel on that account, and the thought deprived her not only of her wonted gaiety but her still dearer curiosity; and, so little speed did she make to the casement,

casement, that the cavaliers were out of sight, and Editha returning, before she had reached the end of the matted gallery.

They were soon after sent for to join the family in the drawing-room, and found that it was their neighbours, the young Sir Raymond Fitz-Alvin and his brother Edgar, who had escorted Lord Clarendon to the Castle.

The Baron, at the request of his family, proceeded to give an account of their meeting; for they had, in their infancy, been the companions of his children and of Albert De Clare, who might, indeed, almost have been reckoned one of them, and they were desirous of being made acquainted with all that concerned them.

After his departure from the Castle in the morning, he rode forward upwards of four miles before he gained the main road,

road, and employed his thoughts in endeavouring to recollect such of his acquaintance, as from the connections of their young kinsmen with Walter, might be the most likely to give him some information relative to his absence, which the Baron was now very doubtful as to what cause it could be attributed, when chance threw in his way that which he least expected.

At a short distance before him, he beheld the white towers of Fitz-Alvin-Castle rising in majestic grandeur above the woods of lofty elms that lay between the mansion and the road, and it struck him that here he might possibly obtain the information he so much desired.

The chearful and enlivening rays of the morning sun beamed brightly on the spires, and reminded the Baron of the many happy days he had spent beneath the roof
of

of its late amiable possessor; but the reflection was painful, for his friend was "in the narrow house," and the days of happiness were no more in the hall of the illustrious Fitz-Alvin. The Baron dropt the reins of his steed, and, entering a well-known path, now almost overgrown with moss and weeds, slowly pursued his way to the Castle-gate.

Sir Douglas, the late possessor of Fitz-Alvin-Castle, had been the intimate companion of Lord Clarendon in his youth, nor had many of his maturer years been past in absence from the approved friend of his heart. Sir Douglas had married a lady who was the relation and juvenal companion of the Baroness; and, as their estates were so near, the families had, from being the companions of each other's idle hours in their youth, become the admirers of each other's virtues, and had, for many years, been almost inseparable.

The

The loss of these truly amiable and beloved companions had occasioned much affliction to the Lord and Lady Clarendon. Sir Douglas had died suddenly about four years before this period, and his death had given so severe a shock to the health of Lady Eleanor Fitz-Alvin, who had, for some time, been in a very consumptive habit, that, in less than a twelvemonth, she followed, to the tomb of her ancestors, a husband whose loss she had never ceased, even for a moment, to lament, till she was sensible that her own dissolution was inevitable; and she then sincerely returned her grateful thanks to heaven that had spared him the affliction of mourning for the loss of what had ever constituted by far the greatest share of his felicity.

They left two sons, their only children, Sir Raymond, then about the age of eighteen, and Edgar, one year younger, and had

had Sir Douglas Fitz-Alvin pursued the bent of his own judgement, there was no man to whose care he would so willingly have confided them as to the Lord Clarendon's. But Sir Douglas, like other people, had some hobby-horses, and one of them was, that relations should always, as much as possible, cultivate the good wishes and opinions of each other. The idea is certainly by no means singular, and it might, or it might not, be very proper in those days, at least in the country, but in our polished regions we know better.

In pursuance of this system, Sir Douglas, though he knew and acknowledged the Baron to be more worthy, had entrusted his sons and their future welfare to the protection of Gilbert De Humphreville, the husband of his sister Jaquiline. Their fortunes were, indeed, as safe as they could be wished, but the happiness of his sons,

sons, during the period of their minority, appeared truly precarious.

The pride of their uncle was insupportable, and the spirits of the young men but little brooked the daily affronts they received from its effects. The first exertion of his power was to command their attendance at his mansion, where he received them in his hall of audience with all necessary dignity; not that Gilbert De Humphreville consulted either their honour or their feelings on the occasion, but his rank was not to be debased by condescending to relations.

After a very ceremonious reception, and much pains very ineffectually taken to impress them with a very high idea of the favour he conferred, he told them that he should, in future, expect them to reside with him, alleging, as a reason, that he did not choose to have the care of dissipated

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pated

pated young men to answer for, unless they were trained beneath his eye: and, in consideration of their being his wards, they should be welcome to Bently-Abbey as long as they remained sensible of the distance between himself and them, and did not aspire to either of his daughters, on whose account he was not indeed absolutely certain that he acted prudently in admitting them at all; however he would do it if they would give, and faithfully observe, the promise he required.

So unpromising a reception could not fail to make the most unfavourable impression on the minds of two young men, who had ever experienced the kindest treatment from their parents and most willing obedience from their domestics. In their new establishment, they were to be allowed but four between them, though in their father's house their appointments were never less than twenty.

Raymond

Raymond at last ventured to ask his uncle, if so many of his domestics were to be put from about his person, what he had determined to do with them? and was informed that they would be discharged. The pride, as well as the humanity, of the youths was alarmed. Their vassals had most of them served their father from his infancy, and many of the younger ones had been his followers from their birth, and it was not, they were certain, his intention that they should be forced in their old age to get their precarious bread in a world to which they were almost strangers.

The suddenness of his death had left his will imperfect, or they would all, no doubt, have been provided for; and it had for such a length of years been the established custom of the land for the sons to retain the followers of their ancestors, that the deter-

mination of their uncle could be regarded in no other light, than a desire of convincing the young men of their dependency.

He had affected too to despise an alliance with their house, and the offence was little less than if he had really done so; but the young Sir Raymond easily discerned that it was the addresses of the younger brother only that were intended to be prohibited; his own he knew would be very far from meeting with an ill reception. And this remark, though he did not communicate it, determined him speedily to adopt some plan for the immediate removal of his brother and himself, and, recollecting the friendship that had ever subsisted between his father and the Lord Clarendon, he determined to solicit for his advice, and be guided by that, and that alone.

The

The Baron was then on the eve of sending Walter to Lord Shrewsbury's, and told him, that, as he intended to follow the profession of arms, he thought there could not possibly be a better reason assigned to his uncle for leaving him, and that he would undertake to procure his welcome reception at the Earl's, who would want no other inducement than the pleasure of receiving the sons of Sir Douglas Fitz-Alvin. He also advised Sir Raymond to request of his uncle an allowance suitable to the rank of himself and brother, and, with regard to the vassals of his late friend, he would, with his permission, advance the necessary sums for their maintenance, until the period of his minority should be elapsed.

Pleased, by any means, to be freed from the power of one whom they had so much reason to dislike, they accepted, with many acknowledgements, the kind-

ness of the Baron. But it was not without some difficulty they obtained the approbation of Gilbert De Humphreville to this arrangement, who really wished for the company of Sir Raymond at the Abbey, because he would have been a desirable match, if he had proposed for one of his family; but he could not be detained without his brother, and his society was not desirable.

In the first place, Edgar was very thoughtless and was very handsome, and, worse than all the rest, he had no fortune but such as he was to acquire by the sword, and Gilbert De Humphreville well knew that merit then, as now, was not always the best recommendation. With many attractions and a heedless heart, who knew but Edgar might forget he was dependant, and who could answer but that some of the females of his family might forget it also.

All

All these circumstances considered, rendered him a dangerous enemy, but he had made the offer before these important reflexions presented themselves; and, as he could not prevail on Sir Raymond to let his brother depart without him, he made a merit of complying with what he wished to be solicited to grant. The young Fitz-Alvins left the Abbey in less than a fortnight, and returned to their mother at Fitz-Alvin-Castle, where they resided for a few weeks, till they were ready to accompany Walter into Cornwall; but Raymond was soon after obliged, by ill health, to visit France, and was absent above a twelvemonth.

C H A P. III.

AFTER riding near an hour through the woods, the Baron arrived in sight of the Castle-gates ; and here he began to hesitate : “ For what purpose,” said he, “ should I waste my time in useless inquiries here ; surely the pleasures that could seduce my son from his purpose of visiting a home he has not entered these three years, may reasonably be supposed to seduce the young Fitz-Alvins also. They have not, alas ! the inducements to return that he has. They are not here. I will pursue my journey.”

Just

Just as he pronounced the sentence, he was about to turn his steed another way, but the natural desire of contemplating a place one has long been used to, determined the Baron to take one look at the Castle, and inquire of the domestics when they had last had tidings of their Lord.

As he approached the gate, he heard the trampling of horses in the court: the sound brought to his memory the days when he had often left the Castle, with Sir Douglas, to follow the diversions of the chase, or when, surrounded by their numerous vassals, they sallied forth the guardians of their country, in the hour of danger.

Lord Clarendon was not a little surprized to find the court crowded with horsemen, when he had expected to find no one there, and hastily inquired if Sir Raymond was at the Castle: but Raymond heard the voice

of the Baron, and ere the servants could answer him was in his arms. "My honoured Lord, I blush to think of my own negligence, that has permitted you to be the first to seek this meeting; believe me, it was not till late yesterday evening that I arrived, and nothing but the fatigue of my brother could have prevented my having ere this enjoyed the honour of attending you."

"My worthy young friend," replied the Baron, "there can be no occasion for this apology, I came not, Raymond, to seek you, though, trust me, I rejoice that we are met; I did not indeed think you were here. But I long to see Edgar, where is he? if he continues to be like yourself, I fear ye will not easily be equalled."

"My Lord, if you can trust a partial speaker, you will find him worthy even of your commendations."

"I

“ I doubt it not, Raymond ; and I will endeavour to hope I shall find another as amiable ; but of that I doubt.” The Baron sighed ; and, taking the arm of his young friend, they walked towards the Castle in search of Edgar.

Sir Raymond understood not the meaning of the Baron’s words, but he too clearly comprehended that he was not happy, but respect compelled him to forbear inquiring. The difference in the conduct of these young men, to that which he had met with from his son, was too apparent not to affect the Baron sensibly ; for he found by Sir Raymond, who most unwillingly revealed the story, that his son was gone on a trip to Calais, with no other motive than to meet the King, who was returning into England. “ To meet the King ! ” exclaimed the Baron. “ My God ! can Walter dare to appear in his presence ; can he be

so forgetful of glory ! What reception can he possibly expect to meet with from King Henry, surrounded as he is by all the gallant gentlemen of the kingdom ? what must he think of a young man who declined going with him to the wars, and who now, like one that fears to encounter the dangers of a battle, pays him the empty compliment of waiting on him, when his services are useless, for the sake of partaking in the rejoicings, for a victory that he had no share in gaining ? The noble Henry will despise my son, and the name of Clarendon be branded with cowardice !”

Raymond endeavoured to palliate the conduct of his friend Walter ; but, alas ! the more the Baron heard, the less reason did he feel to be content with him : politeness, however, required that he should not damp the felicity of his host by his own disappointed expectations, and the day was past very happily on both sides. The young men had
numerous

numerous inquiries to make concerning their old companions, and the Baron of the welfare of his good friend and kinsman of Shrewsbury; and the smile of contentment beamed again on his features, except when the ingratitude of his son rose to his remembrance: but the cloud was momentary, and soon yielded to the desire of making others happy. And, as it was now totally unnecessary to pursue his journey farther, he consented, at the earnest entreaties of the brothers, to be their guest, at least till he had dined; but longer than that he could not be prevailed on to stay.

When the repast was ended, Lord Clarendon arose to depart, for he felt for the anxiety of the Baroness, and wished to relieve it; but, alas! he knew not how. What could he say? it was true her son was well, but his want of affection to her distressed him more than his inattention to himself. Sir Raymond and his brother both unani-

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mously

moufly declared their intention of accompanying him home, and the Baron made no objection; for their conduct had endeared them to him as sons. and he knew the Baronefs would look on them as he did. Their retinue had been ordered in the morning to follow them to Clarendon-Castle, where they were both impatient to pay their respects, and they now attended the Baron back to his Castle.

Tranquillity was now in some measure restored in the family. No one could form any reasonable conjectures when to expect Walter, and the Baron gave orders that no one should keep the watch but the accustomed guards. Albert de Clare continued at Clarendon; but, alas! his happiness was not destined to experience any great degree of increase. The manners of Editha shewed no apparent alteration towards him, in consequence of Maud's discovery, though it was certain she could not observe any thing

thing in his conduct but what must rather contribute to enforce her belief of the assertion than to contradict it, and not a little was she puzzled to account for the extraordinary pains he always took to conceal a passion, which perhaps a little vanity, excusable in a young and beautiful woman of unblemished family and fortune, every way suitable, whispered her he had no cause to be ashamed of.

But a short period put an end to all her conjectures on this subject. When Sir Arthur and Lady De Clare arrived at Clarendon, to keep the Christmas with their sister the Baronefs, one evening after having dined together, Lord Clarendon, accompanied by Albert, proposed to shew Sir Arthur some improvements which had been on the estate since his last visit to the Castle.

The party was very readily agreed to, and the gentlemen departed. The Baronefs
and

and the ladies retired into the west side of the Castle, from whence they could command a distant view of the country around them, and observe, for some distance, the rambles who had just departed. Maude and her sister produced their netting, and the Baroness and Lady De Clare discoursed of times long past, yet not embittered by one reflection that could make either wish one hour forgotten.

In the midst of this discourse, unfortunately, Maude, whose eyes were often prone to wander, raised them from her work, and the first thing they fixed on was Albert, who had left his companions, and was leaning against one of the trees that stood before the windows, so lost in thought that he apparently knew not where he was. "Heavens!" exclaimed Maude, "what can have caused that dejection in the countenance of Albert; I will go to him: will you come, Editha?" and, without waiting

waiting for her, was instantly on her way to him, while Editha followed as fast as she could; for, though she loved not Albert, she never failed to do any thing that might contribute to his happiness, and would most probably have returned his passion, but for the extraordinary pains he took to conceal it from her knowledge.

The exclamation of Maude had interrupted a very interesting conversation of past times, in which the Baroness and Lady De Clare were indulging themselves, and drawn them from the side of a comfortable fire to observe Albert from the window; where they had not long remained ere they beheld the fair sisters tripping with hasty steps across the snow to join their cousin, who, roused by their appearance, quitted his attitude, and hastened to meet them.

A faint smile of pleasure gleamed over his pensive countenance as he gently drew their
their

their hands under his arms; and, as he walked between them into one of the adjoining woods in search of their fathers, seemed, for the present moment, at least, to have banished sorrow from his drooping heart. "Alas, poor Albert!" exclaimed his mother, as she beheld the last glimpse of them waving through the trees: "alas! too well can I now divine the cause of thy unhappiness." The ladies turned from the window, and resumed their seats but not their story.

Interesting as it must be to friends, who meet but seldom, to hear and to relate the transactions that have occurred in the connexions of each in the perhaps long absence of the other, and surely few situations can interest the heart more, yet now it was the case. The tale remained unfinished, nor did either wish to resume it: the heart of Lady De Clare felt much, nor had she a face that could conceal its emotion,

tion, or a wish to do so, had it been in her power.

She at last broke silence. "I feel, my good friend," said she, "that I am, at this moment, very rude to you. I am obtruding my grief on one to whom I never wish to communicate any thing but pleasure, but I also know your friendship will excuse me. That unfortunate young man, my son, will, I foresee, be the cause of much unhappiness; and, alas! I fear not only my own, but my friends' family will be rendered miserable by his means."

Lady Clarendon professed herself totally at a loss to comprehend her meaning, and assured her, which was true, that Albert, so far from disturbing, always brought pleasure to her family whenever he favoured the Castle with his presence. Yet, if it were not intrusive, she wished to be made acquainted

acquainted with the meaning of Lady De Clare's words.

“ Alas !” said she, “ to tell the meaning, I must intreat your attention to what I fear you will think a tedious story. But the unhappiness of Albert results from an attachment which I plainly perceive he has to one of your daughters, and which, if not conquered, will be the cause of unceasing sorrow to him. I have long suspected his frequent visits to the Castle had some more immediate object in view than the mere pleasure of being in the country, and my observations since my residence here have confirmed the idea ; yet I will flatter myself his love is not returned, for, if it is, the lady, which ever he is attached to, must be miserable.”

I have before observed, that if Lady Clarendon had a fault it was family-pride, and her countenance plainly indicated her
displeasure

displeasure on the present occasion. Lady De Clare perceived it, and hastened to explain herself. "I mean not, Lady Clarendon, the slightest affront to my neices, they are both amiable as it is possible to be, and nothing would have made me happier than to have seen one of them the wife of Albert. But I have wandered from my purpose.

"About six years since, Sir Arthur De Clare became, by the decease of his friend Lord Marly, the guardian of his daughter: he had often expressed a wish that our families might one day be united, and made it his dying request that Sir Arthur would do every thing in his power to accomplish it. His daughter gave her promise to be Albert's if he approved or solicited her hand. But as her father suspected she had formed an attachment infinitely beneath her, he a little doubted the sincerity of her intentions; and, when Sir
Arthur

Arthur examined the will of his departed friend, he found that one entire half of her fortune was settled on her if she married Albert, and the other half on him. If she refused him, she was to enjoy but a small sum yearly, and the rest to devolve on Sir Arthur. Had he suspected so severe, and, in his opinion, so unjust a decree, nothing would have prevailed on him to have accepted the charge of Lady Blanche, but he was now engaged in the undertaking, and determined to go through with it with all the delicacy it required.

“ In pursuance of this intention, he began by inquiring into the character of the youth she was supposed to have bestowed her affections on; determining, if he proved worthy of her, to permit the marriage to take place: and, as so large a share of her property would, by this means, become his own, he proposed immediately

mediately to settle it jointly on herself and her husband. Far, however, from answering his expectation were the accounts he received: it appeared, that, so far from being worthy the proposed alliance, he was a person of not only obscure birth, but undeserving character. He had paid his addresses to Lady Blanche because she was an heiress, and was much suspected to be previously married.

“ Lady Blanche was easily consoled for his loss, but carefully avoided giving her determination concerning Albert, who was then abroad. It was easy to perceive the reason of her hesitation, for his elder brother Arthur was then living, and her pride disdained the second place in the family. Too soon, however, was this obstacle removed, and, on the death of my beloved boy, Sir Arthur sent for Albert home.

“ He

“ He was now no longer looked on with disapprobation, and, as soon as the mourning was over, Albert was commanded by his father to address the Lady Blanche, for he saw not the alteration of her behaviour; and, having promised Lord Marly to promote this union, unhappily determined to adhere more punctually to it than will, I fear, be compatible with the wishes of my son.

“ Albert requested time to consider of it: he had not, he professed, seen any lady whom he had absolutely fixed his affections on, but he had seen many whom he infinitely preferred to Lady Blanche: time, however, might teach him to think more favourably of her, and he thought, with the indifference he at present felt, it was an injury to the lady as well as to his own honour to make professions his heart was a stranger to. With this request Sir
Arthur

Arthur complied; but, at the same time, gave him clearly to understand that his consent would never accompany any other marriage.

“ Albert soon after left home on a visit to you: it was nearly half a year before he returned to us, and I soon observed Lady Blanche was more disagreeable to him than ever. Sir Arthur did not propose speaking to him at that time; and, as she had no favoured admirer, he thought he did her no injustice in delaying the declaration of his son. Soon after he returned again to Clarendon-Castle, and I saw, with pain, that his indifference to Lady Blanche arose from some previous attachment. It was impossible for us to surmise to whom he had devoted his affections, for he never talked particularly of any one.

“ Sir Arthur, whose heart was set on carrying into effect his favourite project, perceived

perceived not half the reluctance of his son; and, without inquiring into his sentiments, proposed him as a husband to the Lady Blanche Marly. He was now no longer a younger brother, and she gave him no reason to fear a rejection of his suit. He then informed Albert, and wished him happy, telling him that propriety required there should be no delay on his side in waiting on the lady.

“ Albert, distressed beyond utterance, at length assumed courage to tell his father, what he should long since have informed him of, which was, that his heart was long ago given to another, and who that was, no power on earth should wring from him, unless he was released from the engagements into which Sir Arthur had too precipitately entered; and concluded with requesting permission to make a journey into the country.

“ After

“ After a long contest with himself, Sir Arthur consented upon receiving from Albert a solemn promise to enter into no clandestine engagements, and undertook, for the present, to make his excuses to Lady Blanche. The truth is, there has been faults on both sides. Albert had said, and, I believe, had said truly, that he had no attachment on his return from abroad. Sir Arthur imagined that a person, who had no particular engagement, could have no very great dislike to a lady who possessed the share of beauty which Heaven had bestowed on Blanche: he thinks her amiable too; but in that, I fear, he will be much mistaken.

“ It never occurred to Sir Arthur that Albert had formed any attachment since his return, and he imagined that any little obstinacy he might at present shew, would be laid aside, when he was informed that

propofals had been made, and not unfavourably received.

“ Great was his perplexity on Albert’s avowing his love to another ; he was angry, in appearance, with Albert, and really fo with himfelf. Had he been more clearly informed of Albert’s reason for declining fo honourable an alliance, he would have been the laft to have forced his inclination ; but Sir Arthur had never been informed of his engagements, and had no reason to believe he was fo ; and he felt himfelf ftrongly interefted to keep the promife he had made to promote the marriage. In truth, he had been deceived, and knew not, though willing, how to extricate all parties.

“ I rejoiced when Albert departed, and I doubted not but all would go well, for I fupposed the lady would think herfelf flighted, and release Sir Arthur from an
engagement

engagement he could not, without exerting an unjust authority, fulfil. I was in this idea, however, much deceived. Lady Blanche, I believe, was in love with Albert's opposition: 'She would certainly, if Sir Arthur wished it, release him from his engagements; but, alas! there was no need of that, her death too soon would give Albert the liberty he wished for. Too soon! did she say: ah! no: tedious must be the hours, however few, since Albert loved another!' She then judiciously recollected Sir Arthur was present, and delicacy coming to her assistance, she was so shocked at having owned her unrequited partiality, that she had not time to reach the door ere she fainted.

"Sir Arthur called her attendants, and returned home; when, much to my disappointment, I found she had so wrought on his feelings, that he was determined the marriage should take place at all events.

events. And Lady Blanche has taken it in her head to be so much in love with Albert, that I much fear, in pity to the child of his friend, Sir Arthur will sacrifice the happiness of our own.

“It was his determination, on coming here, to lay his commands on Albert to prepare to return home with us, and immediately to espouse the Lady Blanche Marly. My son’s reflections just now arose, I doubt not, from having received the unwelcome intelligence, and the pleasure he evidently takes in the company of your amiable daughters, convinces me his attachment is to one of them, and will never yield to the attractions of Lady Blanche.

“I own I do not love her, yet I am not so prejudiced but I will acknowledge she is their equal in beauty, nor do they surpass her either in accomplishments or
gentleness

gentleness of manners, but we must look no farther: the heart of Lady Blanche is volatile; but it is not like Maude's: she is lively because she is guileless, but Lady Blanche, under the appearance of thoughtlessness, is capable of the most complicated designs: and much do I imagine her violent attachment to Albert does but conceal some secret design which it is intended to promote the more securely. She has, however, art sufficient to deceive Sir Arthur; but if she will but throw off the disguise I suspect her of, before my son is rendered unhappy, I can freely forgive her."

Lady Clarendon assured her sister, Albert had never intimated the slightest regard beyond that of a relation to either of his cousins. She acknowledged she had wished to see him united to one of them, but his very marked indifference, while it had led them to suspect his attachment,

had also caused them to feel as an affront the pains he took to conceal it. There was now no longer a mystery in his conduct, and she could only agree with Lady De Clare, that the most likely method to preserve all parties from additional uneasiness, was to keep Albert, as much as possible, from Clarendon-Castle.

The party soon returned, and, after the refreshments of the evening, assembled in the great hall, where the coldness of the weather was soon forgot as they followed, with sprightly steps, the enlivening notes of the harp.

Thus did a week elapse in the most perfect hospitality. Albert forgot how soon he must depart; for, while he took Editha's willing hand, and, unobserved, could entertain her without embarrassment on either side, he experienced all the happiness the world

world could bestow, and forgot it was not to last.

It was now almost two months since Walter was expected to have returned home; but, as they had heard nothing since his departure for Calais, they had ceased to look for him: when the Baron, one morning, received a message, intimating that he would be at the Castle the next day, apologizing for his abrupt departure from England, and concluding by particularly entreating his father to use his interest with Lady Clarendon to pardon the unintentional affront he had given her.

Walter knew the disposition of the Baron, and he knew that a slight to his Lady never failed to excite his most extreme displeasure. Had he studied for ever he could not have succeeded better in making a friend of the Baron, than in desiring

him to intercede for him with the Baronefs. He, who had before been too highly offended even to mention Walter, now instantly fought the Baronefs to intreat ſhe would receive him kindly, and give orders for every preparation to be made for his reception.

The Lady Clarendon forgot her ſons ill conduct on his approach; for, till he left her three years ſince, the manners and character of Walter had been irreproachable; and, ſhe flattered herſelf, that, notwithstanding his late behaviour, ſhe ſhould yet find him the ſame ſhe always hoped he would be. Alas! in vain did ſhe flatter herſelf; the heart of Walter was become corrupted; but, happily for the Baronefs, maternal fondnefs rendered her unconſcious of the many failings which ſoon became but too conſpicuous to all around her.

Maude

Maude talked and thought of nothing but the gay Cavaliers who were expected to accompany her brother, nor did the more even disposition of her sister fail, on this occasion, to exert itself in the recollection of their dresses on the ensuing day.

The much-expected hour at length arrived, and the fond parents welcomed their son to their home without one look or reflection that could possibly have called a blush into the cheeks of Walter; who, after introducing some friends who accompanied him, earnestly requested to see his sisters.

It had never been the custom of the Baroneſs, or, indeed, of the times, to ſuffer ſingle ladies to appear much in company; they led a ſecluded life, and ſeldom did the females of a family, even the lady herſelf, appear in the company

of men, except relations; but the entreaties of Walter were not to be withstood, and the Baroneſs diſpatched an attendant to inform her daughters that ſhe deſired them to attend her in the gallery.

Long had they wiſhed for the welcome ſummons, for each longed to behold her darling brother; but to encounter the eyes of ſo many ſtrangers was a taſk to which even the ſpirits of Maude were unequal; and they were as far from obeying the commands of their mother when they received a ſecond meſſage, as when they were firſt informed of her deſire.

It was now impoſſible to delay, and Maude, ſummoning all her reſolution to her aid, led the way, followed by the light ſteps of her timid ſiſter. As they entered the gallery, they were received by the Baroneſs, at whoſe ſide ſat Walter; he embraced his ſiſters with affection, and
preſented

presented them, with exultation, to his companions.

It is difficult to express the admiration they excited in the circle of admiring youths who surrounded them. Beauty had to each been lavish of her choicest gifts, but so differently had she bestowed them, that seldom did the charms of the one clash with the other. On this day they both appeared to uncommon advantage. They possessed in themselves a native grace, which though totally unaccustomed to the gaze of strangers, gave them, in spite of their timidity, an air of elegance which nothing could conquer, and which was heightened by the blush of modesty which decked their cheeks, while they beheld the unfeigned admiration they excited.

The habit worn by Editha was truly elegant: it consisted of a flowing robe of violet-coloured velvet fringed with silver,

and a broad border of rich silver flowers; her vest and petticoat were of silver tissue trimmed with ermine, the sleeves of her robe were loose, and looped up in the front with jewels, and drawn to a point below the elbow by a large silver tassel, under which she wore a close sleeve of the same materials of her vest; her golden hair was ornamented by a small pointed cap of black velvet, from the top of which hung a veil, curiously embroidered by herself, that flowed upon the ground; and her necklace, earrings, and bracelets, were of the finest amethyst. The dress of Maude differed from her sister's in nothing but the colour, which was of a bright scarlet, with emeralds instead of amethysts.

The heart of De Clare beat with fear when he beheld Editha enter, presaging the consequence of her attractions: yet, when he reflected on the engagements into which his father had entered in his name, he
strove

strove to check the interest he felt on her account, for a fortnight only remained ere he was to seek the abode of Lady Blanche. But it would not be. Still was Albert near to the side of Editha, who, thoughtless of the poison she administered, continued ever affable to Albert. It was true she knew he was unhappy, she also knew the cause; but, while the pleasure which sparkled in his eyes, while she preferred his attentions to any other, continued to appear at her approach, she had not resolution to deny him a privilege which was become his from custom. And thus did Editha, by the benignity of her disposition, render absolutely miserable the man, who knew he dare not breathe his love, where every thing conspired to confirm him that little more was wanting to ripen esteem into affection.

Such, indeed, was the situation of Editha's thoughts with regard to Albert. She
had

had long supposed him in love with her; but the apparent ambiguity of his conduct had piqued her pride, and, since she was acquainted with his father's determination, had looked on Albert as she would on an unhappy brother.

Amongst the numerous visitors who sought the Castle, the young Fitz-Alvins were some of the first. And, as Lord Clarendon much esteemed them, they were frequent in their attendance at the Castle. Festivity seemed to have made it her residence, and scarce ever did the night pass in which the hall did not echo to the enlivening harp of the minstrel.

At this time the Baron received an invitation from Lord Shrewsbury to meet him at his Castle in Cornwall, where he intended giving a tournament in honour of King Henry, who was going there to keep his court for some time. This led the
Baron

Baron to inquire of Walter how he had been received at Calais by his Grace; for he had great reason to imagine his reception had been such as would not fail to render his appearance at Lord Shrewsbury's highly disagreeable to Walter; and he was much pleased when he understood his son had given up the idea of waiting on the King, and had passed the time in London.

This trait of humility in Walter proved that he was ashamed to appear before his Sovereign,* which the Baron was pleased with. But as it has never been explained why his proposed attendance on the King had so agitated his father, it may not be improper to relate the cause.

CHAP.

C H A P. IV.

ABOUT four years back, when the young King Henry was just engaged in his expedition against France, previous to his departure, he made, in some measure, the tour of his kingdom; and, passing near the Castle of Clarendon in his way to the castle of a nobleman, where he was to pass some days, he met, in crossing the forest, the Baron of Clarendon. The Baron had never loved or followed his father Bolinbroke, but had warmly, in his youth, espoused

poused the fortunes, or rather misfortunes, of the hapless Richard.

The young Henry, however, on being informed by his attendants who he was, received him with cordiality; for it was his interest, at that time, to ingratiate himself with all his subjects, neither did he, in reality, feel any great resentment to the Baron; for, though fully determined to support his dignity, and guard tenaciously the crown his father left him, his heart did not fail to tell him it had been unjustly obtained.

The Baron too, though he hated the father, yet as Richard had left no one nearer to him than the present king, felt no repugnance in acknowledging him as his sovereign; and, as he was received with every mark of distinguished approbation, determined immediately to wait on his Grace, and offer every service in his power on the present extraordinary occasion. He accordingly

ly summoned his vassals; and, on the fourth morning, set off, at the head of four hundred followers, to wait on the King.

Henry received him with the utmost affability; and, on the Baron's making an offer of his followers to attend his Grace abroad, he thanked him for his attention to his interest, and received them with every mark of approbation. He was the more pleased with this noble offer, as he well knew the support of a man, so powerful as the Baron, could not fail to draw to his standard many who, like him, had hated Bolinbroke.

The King immediately proposed to confer on young Walter, who followed his father, the honour of knighthood, adding, that he doubted not his brave vassals would rather follow their young master than any other leader.

The

The Baron had declined attending the King abroad himself; for, having so many years absented himself from the world, he had little or no inclination again to enter it, when few or none of his old companions could be supposed to remain in the ranks of war, and the King's proposal of knighting Walter excited his warmest gratitude.

Walter was much too young to have expected such an honour: how great then must have been his disappointment on hearing his son decline it. It was totally out of his power to conceal his emotions, and vexation appeared conspicuous in every feature. The King, who observed the chagrin he felt, endeavoured to remove it by every attention he could possibly bestow; and, after a long audience, the Baron departed, satisfied with himself, and pleased with the King, but exceedingly distressed at the behaviour of his degenerate son.

In

In vain did he reproach him for his conduct, in vain did he endeavour to discover the motive of it. Cowardice, the Baron thought, had no share in it, for he had often heard him express the most ardent wish to follow the profession of arms; indeed, from his infancy, his every wish had pointed to this favourite object of his heart.

A very short time discovered what he had taken so much pains to conceal; when one day, as the Baroness was returning from vespers at the neighbouring convent, her confessor, Father Austin, intreated the honour of her attention for a few moments to something of importance he had to impart. The Baroness immediately complied, and the reverend Austin conducted her into the parlour of the convent: when he informed her, that, about a fortnight before, the wife of a principal tenant of the Baron had come to the convent to request his permission for
her

her daughter to be received there; that she had permitted the addresses of Walter Clarendon; and, on her father forbidding her to see him, had been prevailed on to admit him to her father's house in private. That her parent, discovering their meetings, and greatly doubting the intentions of Walter, whose rank forbade a daughter of his to aspire to an honourable place in his affections, had turned her out of doors, nor could he be prevailed on to receive her home again.

The good Father said that he willingly received her into the convent, and had tried every method to appease her father, but in vain. Indeed, added he, I fear I thought too well both of Adela and her lover; for last night she effected her escape from the convent, and suspicion falls heavy on Walter, as it is believed he must have assisted, if not accompanied, her. The Fathers of our house will most assuredly pursue

purſue him with ſeverity ; for the convent is a ſanctuary which muſt not be lightly treated ; and I know of no method to preſerve him from their wrath, unleſs you, madam, could, by your influence, induce him to reſtore Adela to our protection.

The Baroneſs departed to the Caſtle extremely diſtreſt by the intelligence ſhe had received ; her heart revolted at the idea of ſuſpecting Walter guilty, but Father Auſtin's veracity was not to be doubted : he had accuſed him, and ſo holy a man would not ſpeak in malice, and was too certain to be miſtaken.

Carefully did the Baroneſs obſerve the actions of her ſon for ſome days ; and, finding him much more frequently abſent than uſual, determined to watch him cloſely. The more ſhe followed Walter, the farther ſhe was from diſcovering him ; and, finding the Fathers of the convent intended
to

to prosecute him, was compelled to inform the Baron. He knew full well the danger of offending the community, and instantly informed his son of his danger, advising him immediately to restore her, who he doubted not he had somewhere concealed.

For sometime Walter resolutely refused to resign her, though he boldly avowed his knowledge of her flight; but, at length, tired with the importunities of his father, and the inconvenience she was likely to occasion him, he informed the Baroness she was in his apartments in the Castle, and offered to resign her if she would take her under her protection. This she readily promised, and as readily performed; and she rejoiced at her son's resolution, which she imputed to returning virtue.

Alas! she imputed it to a wrong cause, and she did not see that he resigned her merely because he was weary of detaining
one

one who would now most likely become troublesome to him: and he, who two months back refused to follow his Sovereign to the wars, and incurred disgrace, to continue near the abode of the fair Adela, now willingly parted with her, and scarcely did he bid her adieu as he resigned her to his mother at the door of her apartment.

The Baroness restored her immediately to the convent, and, owing to the respect they bore the Baron and herself, they gave their promise to let the affair go no farther.

But the gentle heart of the Baroness felt for the situation of the hapless Adela, and soon took her back to her own protection, by the permission of her parents; for painful, she felt, it must be to her, to continue in a place where every one regarded her as a person who ought to be shunned by society.

She

She judged rightly ; for Adela, though seduced by the flattering arts of Walter, still, in her heart, was virtuous ; nor could she ever again be reconciled to herself or those who had formerly known her. By her own desire, the Baroness settled her as a boarder in a distant monastery, and allowed her a sufficient income, even if she chose to leave it. Greatly she pitied Adela, and was distressed to think that one so young, so beautiful, deluded too by her own son, should be deserted by her own family, confined to a gloomy solitude, and, perhaps, compelled for life to remain in a retirement she abhorred.

Kind as were the intentions of the Baroness, they were destined to be useless ; never did a smile, except that of gratitude, again adorn the cheeks of Adela : and scarce did five short months elapse, ere

she fell a victim to the luckless love she still bore to Walter.

During this time he had been removed from the Castle. The Baron possessed too much humanity to suffer him to appear before the parents of her he had betrayed; and, as he had now discovered the cause of his refusal to accompany the King, he determined to send him to study the profession of arms, and he fixed on the Lord Shrewsbury as one to whom he could confide the care of his son with safety.

The Baron saw more to concern him in the late transaction than even his lady; for he had reflected more on it, and thought he observed, in the manner in which Walter had deserted Adela, much of cruelty; and he determined to prevent, as much as possible, any union he might wish to form with women, with whom he
had

had any interest, unless he could see that trait in his temper eradicated.

Lord Clarendon informed his son of the proposal; adding, it was his desire he should accept it, as he wished him to leave home for some time, but that he himself could not at present undertake so long a journey.

Walter agreed to the proposal with avidity, and hastened to seek the Fitz-Alvins, to know whether they were to be of the party. It was not long ere they assembled in the gallery, and the conversation instantly turned on the preparations which each were making for the encounter.

The ladies, who had never been present at a tournament, were delighted at the idea of this visit; and Maude had already, in imagination, not less than half a dozen young knights at her feet suing to

wear her chains; when all her hopes were crushed by Walter's informing her that a messenger had already departed to accept, in the Baron's name, the invitation for his son, and to carry an excuse for the rest of the family.

Vexation sat on the brow of Editha, but she remained silent; but Maude made an attempt to shake the resolution of her father by every winning art she was capable of practising. Seldom were her entreaties unsuccessful, but she now found them so, and addressed her complaints to the Baroness, desiring her to intercede for them; for a request from her, she knew, never met with a refusal. The Baroness told her it was no less her wish to remain at Clarendon than it was their father's, who, she assured her, was sorry for the vexation he inflicted by debaring them this amusement; "but," added she, "the time is, perhaps, not far distant when my dear girls will enjoy
more

more liberty : in the mean time, endeavour to be happy here, and, be assured, no pleasures you may pursue will be opposed either by the Baron or myself."

It is difficult to imagine the different sensations to which this trifling incident gave rise : the young Fitz-Alvins in particular were sincerely sorry, for they admired the sisters, and had pleased themselves with the idea of the envy they should excite in the breasts of other youths, who would be doomed to behold such perfections without that privilege of intimacy which it was their good fortune to enjoy. Even Walter was sorry they were not to accompany them ; for, though they were his sisters, he could not be blind to their attractions, and feel an inward satisfaction in being regarded as their protector.

Lady De Clare blamed, without reserve, this conduct of her brother, who thus bu-

ried, in the obscurity of his old mansion, two of the brightest ornaments England could boast of: while the Baron, as he hung leaning over the sofa his daughters sat on, wiped from his reverend cheek a falling tear, while, with trembling voice he articulated, "Good sister cease, believe me I am grieved to deny them any pleasure, but, at present, it is impossible to introduce them to the world as they should appear." No one but the Baroness understood the meaning of these words, who, to relieve the embarrassment apparent in most of the party, proposed adjourning to the hall, and pass the evening in dancing.

The gloom apparent in the countenances of the younger part of the company soon wore off, and one, at least, might be said to rejoice in the late disappointment: that one was Albert. Yet Albert's heart was a stranger to ill-nature, but he feared a rival in every beholder of Editha.

Alas!

Alas ! he did not then observe there was already a rival too formidable to be easily supplanted, nor did he, at the moment, reflect that he himself was vowed the husband of another.

Preparations were now going forward daily for the departure of Walter and his companions, and Maude forgot the recent disappointment in the share she took in decorating their accoutrements. But, contrary to her usual pacific disposition, the chagrin of Editha seemed to increase as their departure drew nigh. In vain did Maude solicit her assistance and opinion, she was unwilling to give either ; to converse on the subject seemed displeasing to her, and, when the youths assembled round Maude to consult her taste in the ornamental parts of their vests or helmets, the tear would glitter in the eyes of Editha, and she commonly left the apartment without

appearing to feel the least interest in any thing around her.

The Baroness supposed this extraordinary change had arisen from a desire of shewing her resentment to herself and the Baron; yet such conduct from Editha she had never been accustomed to; for seldom, indeed, had she presumed to dispute any point on which they had determined, neither was she ever so particularly attached to amusement as to shew much concern for it; and, to appear so impolite to their guests, highly displeased her. The Baroness, however, was far from having arrived at the true cause.

Sir Raymond Fitz-Alvin, who was one of the most engaging of his sex, and added to every beauty a heart replete with every virtue. Long, in secret, had he admired the gentle virtues which beamed conspicuous in every action of the accomplished

plished Editha; but the marked attentions which he observed paid to her by Albert, and to be apparently well received by her, had determined him to keep in his own bosom the secret of his love, at least till he should be more certain whether Albert was regarded by Editha as a friend or a lover.

He had never heard of Lady Blanche, for, as every one observed how painful it was to Albert to be reminded of that engagement, his father had deemed it the most likely method to succeed in his favourite plan by not urging him too often on the subject. He knew how large a share honour had ever held in the heart of Albert, and doubted not but that would soon enable him to perform the promise he had too hastily given to Lady Blanche, that Albert should become her husband.

Ignorant, by this means, that it was impossible Albert should address Editha, he saw in every action the lover conspicuous, and, as fancy, when once she is on the wing, as easily believes one thing as another, he made no doubt she was equally attached to her cousin; he determined, therefore, to go to the tournament, not so much for the pleasure he expected to receive there, (for where was he so happy as at Clarendon?) as with the intention of asking the favour of the King to be employed in his wars abroad.

Fatal was the hour in which Sir Raymond formed this resolution, and, alas! not to himself alone was it doomed to be the cause of much unhappiness. Had he observed the actions of the fair Editha with the cool attention of a friend, he might have discovered that he, and only he, was ruler of her heart, he reigned in every thought,

thought, and was, unknowingly, the arbitrator of her future peace.

That she partook not of the amusements of the court hurt not Editha; but, alas! how many beauties would soon, too soon, present themselves before the admiring eyes of the accomplished Raymond; yet, when she heard his intention of departing from the kingdom, the fear of a rival, formidable as it had lately appeared, vanished at once. What dangers was he not going to encounter, and, alas! how evident he loved no one in England.

Sometimes she had flattered herself she shared some part of his esteem, and now no longer could she harbour such a thought. If Raymond loved, he would not leave her. Seldom did the conversation turn on their departure for the tournament, that some ill-starred accident did not remind her she

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should

should soon see him depart, most probably, for ever.

To one who loved like Editha, what torment could exceed the thought; yet happy had it been perhaps for her had her prophetic heart predicted truly. Unconscious of the idea Sir Raymond had formed of Albert De Clare, she would give him her hand in the evening dance, to avoid being suspected of partiality in always giving her hand to Sir Raymond, for generally did he fall to her lot. Thus being ever industrious to torment herself, she did not fail, by false constructions, to impute to necessity more than choice; for, as to Edgar, he, as well as Maude, was too thoughtless for them ever to change for any other of the party, and Walter would rather dance with Amable than either of his sisters.

At last the day arrived on which they were to depart for Cornwall. The youths
were

were early up and accoutred, and waited only for the coming of the young Duke of Northumberland, who had promised to join their party; but they had not long to wait for one who was as eager for the tournament as themselves. Walter went out upon the battlements to look if he could observe them approaching, and soon discovered the Duke, attended by many of the neighbouring nobles, riding at the head of his train; and he descended with haste to meet him; but the banners already moved in the court, and the Duke and his companions were alighted. At the request of Walter, they entered the Castle to pay their compliments to the Baroness and her fair daughters, for the attention to the female part of the creation was not then, as now, considered to be a custom "more honoured in the breach than the observance."

While

While the young Cavaliers were thus employed, their followers were, by the orders of the Baron, regaling themselves in the hall with those who were to attend young Walter. The old veterans of former days listened with delight to their tale of victory, for they had most of them been in the late victorious wars under the command of the gallant Harry the Fifth; and, as he heard the dangers they had past in places where, in his earliest days, he had shared the fortunes of his lord, he again fought, in idea, the battles of his youth, again he tore the banner from their walls, and wept to think it must now be fancy only that he beat the foes of his country again, he cordially shook the hand of his old comrade, and wished these womenish shows had more of action in them.

At

At leaving the Castle, they dropped their banners in honour of the ladies who attended them to the gates, for they did not deem attention to their friends a derogation from their dignity. But, alas! the resolves of Sir Raymond could last no longer; he caught the hand of Editha, and begged her prayers for his success; nor could he conceal the joy that sparkled in his eyes when she gave her promise to recommend him in her orisons, and pray for his return; she meant to have said his safety, but her tongue refused control, and she blushed, for the first time, at having uttered the sentiments of her heart.

No one noticed this mistake apparently so much as Maude, who could now explain in a moment the reason of the extraordinary change she had lately observed in the manners of her sister. Yet there was one more in the party by whom it did
not

not pass unnoticed; that one was Albert; and painful, indeed, to his heart was the conviction, that Editha was lost to his hopes for ever.

CHAP.

C H A P. V.

THE family stood on the steps of the Castle observing their progress across the forest, until distance denied them the continuance. The Baron breathed a fervent prayer that Walter might retrieve the honour he had lost, and prove himself not unworthy of his illustrious race of ancestors, in which he was sincerely joined by his lady; after which they returned to the gallery, where they received the unwelcome

welcome information that Lady Isabel De Clare intended to take her leave of Clarendon-Castle on the next morning. She had that hour been told by a messenger, dispatched to her by Lady Blanche Marly, of her return to London, for that her health was in so precarious a situation, as almost to preclude a hope of recovery, and induced her to entreat Lady Isabel to come to her immediately.

This was, no doubt, far from being agreeable to the Lady Clarendon or her sister, for they but seldom enjoyed the pleasure of meeting, and had hoped to be together for a much longer time ; but Sir Arthur had declared his intention of attending her directly. He believed her to be really in extreme danger, and would never have thought he acted right by the daughter of his friend, had he, at such a time, neglected her ; and, indeed, on such an occasion, however they might wish it, no person

person could reasonably make any great opposition to his determination.

But Sir Arthur neither saw or suspected that Lady Blanche was, in secret, laughing at his credulity, and leading him on in an error, till he should involve his son in misery : for Sir Arthur, who had ever been in the habit of speaking as he really thought, never entertained an idea that Lady Blanche would fetch his family so long a journey merely in hopes of putting off the alliance with his son, whom he believed she was in love with ; nor was it any thing extraordinary that he should think so, for the lady had certainly put herself to no small inconvenience to convince him of it. But Lady Blanche loved not Albert De Clare, or ever had a thought of marrying him, for Lady Blanche had, amongst her other inestimable qualities, no contemptible portion of coquetry ; and, to a lady who was accustomed to receive universal

versal admiration, or, at least, flattery, which she regarded as the same thing, it cannot be supposed that a young man of a serious disposition, and who seldom or ever complimented any body, was likely to be very agreeable. But Sir Arthur had, in compliance with the promise made her father, offered him to her acceptance, and she too well knew the consequence of refusing his hand, to entertain the most distant idea of adopting such a measure. But she trusted to time to favour her with a better opportunity, if she could avoid giving a positive answer to the proposal immediately. The death of his elder brother had, however, somewhat staggered her resolution, and she had condescended to accept the addresses which he had never yet been prevailed on to pay her, when the young Duke of Somerset made her an offer of his hand and fortune.

Ambition

Ambition had ever been the ruling principle of her heart, and avarice had no small share in it; and Lady Blanche, though engaged to another, instantly determined to accept the Duke.

To some ladies this situation would have been rather embarrassing; but Lady Blanche had an enterprising genius, and did not entertain a doubt but she could, with a little good management, bring the affair to a desirable conclusion: as the first step, she enjoined the Duke, under penalty of her everlasting displeasure, to keep secret their mutual good opinion till their marriage could take place; alleging that she was totally in the power of her guardian, Sir Arthur, whom avarice had induced to force her into a marriage with his son; and, from this consideration, she was certain he would receive a refusal; but, by not appearing to dislike Albert, she doubted not of
soon

soon being able to obtain her release from some articles of agreement to which she had been compelled, against her will, to sign her consent.

This project did not in any great degree meet with the approbation of the Duke. He knew his family to be one that was worthy of the first alliances in the kingdom, and ill did his impatient spirit brook the idea of a refusal; for, to a mind endued with the most liberal and noble sentiments, he was not free from that degree of pride that is generally the attendant of high birth, and most unwillingly was he brought to keep his addresses secret; but Lady Blanche was artful, and the Duke in love to distraction.

Once secure of his silence, she feared not to surmount all difficulties, and shortly assume the enviable dignities annexed to the title of Duchess of Somerset, not that she
had

had a greater degree of regard for the Duke than for Albert De Clare, or any other nobleman who might wear her chains. But to outshine all the belles of her acquaintance at the Court, and to take place of them at the tilt and tournament, were temptations by no means to be withstood.

It is true, that, by forfeiting a part of her fortune, she could have married whom she pleased, independent of the approbation of any one; and fortune, in the opinion of the enamoured Duke, was not worthy of a moment's consideration. But not so in the mind of Lady Blanche; a large fortune would be certain to command large settlements; and large settlements were to constitute by far the greater part of Lady Blanche's felicity.

Thus then, instead of acknowledging to Sir Arthur her engagement to the Duke, which had she done, he would immediately
have

have agreed to, and on her marriage have given to her all that he would have become possessed of, she was ungenerous enough to entertain the idea of compelling Albert, whom she had the penetration to discover did not entertain any very great opinion of her, to refuse her hand, by which means she hoped to become the mistress of her entire fortune ; never in the least regarding the displeasure he would by that means fall into with his father, or reflecting on the family dissention she might occasion. To be sure, had she been certain that Sir Arthur would have acted so honourably, she would have been as well pleased to spare herself so much trouble ; but how was she to be sure of it, when Lady Blanche never did a liberal thing herself, and could not believe that any body would be so foolish as to give away money merely to oblige others. But, on this occasion, Lady Blanche Marly had, as many a one has done both before and since, been laying a plan that rather tended
to

to defeat than to accomplish the end proposed; and, as the Duke began to grow impatient, she had feigned herself ill, to engage their speedy return to the metropolis, that she might the more effectually commence her operations.

The party whom we left at Clarendon were not, as may reasonably be imagined, greatly disposed to mirth. The dance was proposed indeed, but the proposal was unsupported even by Maude, who declared for once, that she did not feel herself sufficiently in spirits to enjoy it that evening; and, after they had taken their coffee, the Baron and Sir Arthur betook themselves, for the last evening, to their favourite game of chess, on one side of the glowing hearth, while Lady De Clare and the Baroness occupied the sofa on the other; and, by the multitude of things they had to say to each other, seemed to have met but yesterday. Albert took his fair cousins under his protection,

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tection, and they sallied out, in defiance of the cold bleak winds of the north, to enjoy the pleasure of contemplating the beauty of the evening.

The moon was just risen in full splendour from behind the Castle, and gleamed brightly on the sea, that rolled in awful solemnity beneath the ramparts, while from a small distance they could behold the tall sails of the coasting vessels that were moored in Saint Luke's Bay, a little to the left of Clarendon; while the cheerful, though unskilful, song of the sailors on watch seemed to breathe peace and tranquillity to every thing around them, nor did the unconscious musician receive an interruption from our little party, but each in secret sighed, and wished their bosoms were as free from care as his was; for in this spot, and at this hour, had Albert in the morning determined to break through the resolves that had so long kept him silent, and from

Editha's

Editha's lips, ere he departed, hear his doom. Her gentle attentions, which had arisen from pity of his melancholy, had almost inspired him with a hope that he might be beloved; but, alas! his flattering dream of happiness was destined to be short; for he had observed, with a jealous eye, the actions of Sir Raymond at his departure, and had witnessed the emotions of Editha with despair.

The result of his cooler reflection had induced him to abandon the idea of owning his love, or attempting to awaken compassion in a heart that was already in the possession of another; yet he could not walk with Editha, who rested on his arm with all the confidence of their infant days, he could not hear her express in the tenderest accents her wish to remove his too visible affliction, without experiencing emotions that were painful to endure, but harder to conceal. Editha, finding her companion

unfit for conversation, forbore to address him, and even Maude was silent; and longer had they walked, for the scene was congenial to the temper of their minds, but the moon, now sinking behind the battlements, withdrew her soothing beams, and warned them to return.

After they were rested, Editha, at her cousin's request, took her harp, and Maude accompanied her with her voice. The song was a complaint against fortune, that separates too often those friends whose happiness is centred alone in the society of each other. It was the theme that vibrated in unison with the feelings of Albert's heart, and, in soft notes, he unconsciously united his voice with those of the fair sisters. The melodious strain attracted the attention of the party by the fire-side. Sir Arthur waited for the Baron to take his move, but the Baron's head was turned to the other end of the room, and Sir Arthur might

might have exercised his patience for an hour if he had pleased; the Baron would not have remembered him, had not Lady Clarendon awakened him from his forgetfulness by a gentle remonstrance. Her lord turned to apologize, but the apology was unnecessary; Sir Arthur was thinking as little of chess as he was: they, however, attempted to renew their game, but the attempt was useless; Lord Clarendon moved, but he moved his adversary's bishop instead of his own, — begged pardon, — moved again, — still wrong. Sir Arthur was as unfortunate, for he had, by some unaccountable accident, made two white bishops at a time: the Baron smiled, and, by a silent inclination of the head, the gentlemen agreed to decline what it was fruitless to attempt.

The hearts of all the three, that formed this little concert, bore, perhaps, equal testimony to the truth of the sentiment, but

none could more unsuccessfully conceal their feelings than the hapless Albert: a few hours only remained, and she, whom he had from infancy adored, would bid him probably a last farewell; or, if they met again, no longer must they give way to that sweet cordiality of speech and free communication of sentiment that is the greatest of all earthly happiness. It would then be a crime to love Editha; nay to see her, for how could he behold and cease to love her, even though he should then too probably be the husband of another; and, worse than all the rest, even though his hated marriage should not take place, was it not too probable that the hand of Editha would be no longer free. The struggle of his soul was more than he could support, his voice trembled, the words died away unpronounced, and the tear dropped uncontrolled down his expressive face.

Editha

thor speaking as if he were coming through the apartment; and, fearful of the conjectures he might form, she called to Albert, but Albert heard her not. She took his hand: — “For God’s sake, Albert, exert yourself, you terrify me to death! do not look so grave, but speak to me.” — “O! that you were but Editha!” he exclaimed, and pressed the hand she had given him. — “Pooh! that is none so civil: I do assure you I am as well content to be myself; but, my good friend, your father is coming, and we make but a picturesque appearance; would it not be as well to adjourn to the place of our destination?”

“I will go with you presently, Maude:” and he leaned his head on his hand, and again was silent; while Maude quietly seated herself by his side to wait his leisure, but the handle of the inner door began to move, and, not being very desirous of

of

of being observed, she started from her cushion, and, taking her lamp, left the room as fast as possible.

The Baron and Sir Arthur had, in the mean time, contented themselves with some peevish reflections on what they called the unseasonable whim of her who had thus deprived them of the pleasure they were enjoying, and then resumed their game.

Maude and her cousin were busily employed in arranging a few new books that she had lately acquired, and which treated chiefly of romance and chivalry, and he, by degrees, became composed enough to be tolerable company; for he flattered himself, that, as Maude had not mentioned his uneasiness, she had not guessed the cause of it, and she knew too well the pain it would inflict on his feelings to undeceive him; and, as he was now himself

I 5 again,

again, she proposed returning to the drawing-room, for Albert had already ventured to hazard two or three distant questions relative to the change in the manners of Editha; the cause of which Maude very clearly comprehended; but, as it was not in her power to tell him any thing that was calculated to afford him pleasure, she wisely determined to tell him nothing.

She took up her lamp, and, as Albert followed her with a book that she had given him, "We will call for Editha," said she; "I doubt not but we shall find her in her chamber:" but, at the moment she turned her steps towards the passage that led to her sister's apartments, she uttered a loud scream, and fell into the arms of Albert.

"For God's sake, Maude, what has alarmed you? what is the matter?"

"O

“ O heavens ! did you not see him ? ”

“ See who ? No, I saw nothing ; be not so frightened, I will fetch Editha.”

“ Oh, no ! do not venture that way, you will meet him. Albert, if I live, I saw a figure enter a door at the end of the north passage.”

“ Then will I enter after him,” said Albert, “ for his flight bodes no good intention.”

Maude earnestly entreated him to desist, but in vain ; he drew his dagger from his belt, and, desiring her not to quit her room, into which she had retreated, till his return, he took the lamp in his other hand, and departed down the passage ; but Maude, who had in her composition some little smattering of a disobedient spirit,

no sooner saw him move from the spot, than she made towards her sister's apartment, calling loudly for lights and assistance.

At the sound of her voice Editha unfastened her door, and, with a countenance that expressed no less degree of alarm than her sister's, entreated to know what had so greatly terrified her; but, without waiting for a reply, she proceeded to inform her how much *she* had been alarmed by hearing the footsteps of somebody in the north gallery. She had left the drawing-room immediately after Maude, and retired to her own, and taken up a book that she had left unfinished on her table; but not long had she been seated before her attention was roused by a light step on the stair-case, and, imagining it to be Maude come in quest of her, she sat in momentary expectation of her entrance: still, however, she came not, but still
the

the steps were heard. Editha called, but received no answer; and, after repeating the experiment, she rose to go towards the door, when she heard the footsteps of some one move quickly away, as if to avoid her observation.

Fear took possession of her heart, though what to fear she knew not, for it was almost impossible for any one to be secreted in the Castle: yet it was evident, from the cautious steps she had heard, that, whoever it was, they wished to be concealed; she recollected at how great a distance she was from the rest of the family, and how totally useless as well as dangerous it would be to call for assistance; nor had she courage to approach near enough to the door to shut it: in hopes, however, of escaping observation, she resolved to remove her light, and place herself so as to see what passed along the passage, if possible without being seen herself.

Scarce

Scarce had she accomplished her operations, ere a faint light began to glimmer on the walls of the passage, and, swift as thought, a figure past the door of her apartment.

Never before had her spirits undergone so severe an agitation as at that moment; yet she determined to assume the courage to watch the actions of this ambiguous person, and, with a trembling heart, she stepped as light as possible into the gallery to observe what course the figure had taken; but her step was not so light as to escape unheard, for she had only time to observe a light glimmering from a very distant door ere it creaked on the rusty hinge, and was closed in an instant.

Editha knew not what to resolve on; the person, whoever it was, was now far enough from her to secure her from being easily

easily overtaken by him; but might he not have companions who would think it their interest to interrupt her flight, should she attempt to descend the stair-case. Thus situated, she again retreated to her room, where she fastened the door on the inside, and determined to continue there till some of the family should come to her. She heard soon after the voices of Maude and Albert, but was so prepossessed in the belief of their belonging to the person she had seen, that she did not recollect them till Maude spoke at the door, whither she had found her way in the dark. Albert, who had gone with the intention of searching every apartment on that side the Castle, was not yet returned, and they began to entertain the most alarming apprehensions for his safety, when they suddenly heard him calling loudly for lights.

Editha, without hesitation, took up her lamp and went to his assistance, while
Maude,

Maude, summoning all her resolution to her aid, descended into the hall, where she alarmed the domestics. The alarm-bell on the Castle was rung out, the draw-bridge taken up, and every one in the Castle was instantly in motion and in arms.

Albert informed them, that, having been in every apartment to which he could gain access, and not meeting any thing to create suspicion, he was returning back to conduct his cousin down stairs, well satisfied in his own mind that she had been alarmed without reason; when, passing the large folding-doors that led into those apartments of the north gallery that were never opened, it appeared to him to have been recently unclosed: this extraordinary circumstance did not fail to excite his attention, and, on a nearer observation, he found that the bolts were all undrawn and the bar removed: in consequence of this he determined

mined to enter, in order to discover if any person was concealed there; but scarce had he laid his hand on the door for the purpose of opening it, ere he felt it forcibly pushed against him, and somebody from the inside in the dark rushed by him, and, in the haste with which they past, threw down his lamp, and left him in total darkness, without the smallest possibility of pursuing his flight.

Every one in the Castle was now assembled, listening with wonder to the narration. Various were the conjectures they formed: the porter affirmed he had not left his station, and he was certain no stranger was in the Castle; Editha was as positive she had seen somebody pass into a room at the end of the gallery; and Albert requested, as there were plenty of torches, that one party should guard the passage that led to the great stairs, while the other, with the Baron's permission, should

should search the whole of the uninhabited apartments.

“Holy Mary!” exclaimed Maude, “not for the world, you cannot find a spectre!”

“A spirit, Maude!” replied the Baron, “what has thus disturbed your imagination? I hope our ancestors never did anything to disturb the dead, and I insist that such ideas are not propagated to disturb the tranquillity of the Castle.”

Maude was silent, but she did not give up her opinion, and not a few were there who thought the same.

Albert still pressed the Baron to permit him to enter, but he answered he would go himself, and, absolutely forbidding any one to follow him, departed. The Baroness

roness led the way down stairs, followed by the rest of the family: some of them, indeed, had, in their eagerness to quit the gallery, quite forgot the respect they owed her, and more than once were on the point of passing her, so fearful was every one of being left the last.

The young ladies expressed their wonder that the Baroness should, with so much confidence, leave the Baron alone in a place which they looked on as beset with so many terrors; but she replied she knew of none that existed except in their own ideas, which she advised them to get the better of.

The Baron soon returned, and said he was perfectly satisfied all was safe, and imputed the whole of the alarm to nothing more than the imagination of Maude and Albert, who he said, he supposed, had been reading each other into the vapours.

As

As the subject appeared disagreeable to the Baron, no more was said about it till the family were to retire for the night, when the ladies expressed their uneasiness at returning to their own apartment, and it was not till after many entreaties of the Baroness, who represented the alarm that would spread amongst the domestics if they deserted them, that they consented once more to occupy that side of the Castle.

She told them, in confidence, she did not deny there was a mystery attached to that side of the Castle, but they might rest assured, that, though it nearly concerned them, it had nothing in it to occasion alarm.

Early in the morning Sir Arthur and his lady departed, and Albert bid adieu to Editha, with a secret determination never
to

to be another's while she was disengaged, and no sooner was he out of her sight, than he resolved to do every thing that might contribute to his father's honour.

Time now passed slowly at the Castle. No news could yet be expected from Walter, Lady Clarendon regretted the departure of her sister, the Baron was seldom cheerful, and the minds of the family were fixed on nothing but spectres and visions. In this manner did they spend about a fortnight, when they received a letter from Walter filled with accounts of the most pleasing nature. The King had condescended to favour them with the greatest affability and good-humour. Nor did any one appear to stand higher in his estimation than Walter and his friends, who had already acquitted themselves with honour in more than one encounter; and, as the
tournament

tournament was to cease in a few days, he informed them of his intention of returning to Clarendon at the end of the following week.

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WALTER was, for once, true to his promise, and, at the time appointed, arrived at Clarendon, where he gaily presented the Baroness with the trophies of his victory, and his example was followed by his companions, who were, as they called it, returned home also; though, perhaps, had they presented them where their inclination led them, it would have been more probably at the feet of her fair daughters.

“ And

"And where," said Lady Clarendon, "is your young friend the Duke of Northumberland? I hoped he would have honoured us with returning with you, Walter."

"The Duke attends King Henry, madam, to Chichester, but he commends him to you by your servant, and prays to live in your good remembrance. He humbly entreats you to honour him by the acceptance of his glove, by which he has declared you the most courteous dame of Cumberland."

The Baroness smiled at his gallantry, for she was somewhat past the days of beauty; nor did a young knight often take the pains to pay a compliment from meer politeness.

"We

“ We thank the Duke,” said she, “ and will hang his gauntlet in our hall, more to make known his kindness than our own deserts. But you have taken no refreshments yet : when you have dined, and feel composed for company, we will expect you in the hall to help us to arrange your spoils.”

The young men were not long absent, but, in less than half an hour, again joined the Lady Clarendon and her fair daughters, where mirth and tranquillity alone presided. One of the first questions that Walter asked, when Maude, who was never tired of hearing the adventures at the tournament, would give him an opportunity, was to inquire what was become of Albert De Clare ; to which the Baron replied, “ he was gone to London to be married, he believed.”

“ Married, my lord,” said Raymond,
“ and your family at Clarendon ?”

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“ True,”

"True," replied the Baron, "I own it is a compliment I owe to Albert to have been present at his nuptials; but he knows my humour, I do not love to travel, and he will excuse it."

"I cannot comprehend this affair, your pardon, my lord; but I thought, I — I understood ——"

"My young friend you must pardon me, but I believe you do not just at present know what you thought. — But may I ask why the marriage of my kinsman should so much concern Sir Raymond? there is, I hope, no rivalry."

"I imagined, my lord, that your family would have been more immediately concerned than to have admitted of your absence."

"Oh, by no means, I have, I believe, seen the lady, but have not even the most distant right to interfere in her disposal."

"Thank heaven you have not!" replied Sir Raymond.

"You

“ You make me curious, sir,” said the Baron; “ may I be informed to whom you thought my kinsman likely to be united ?”

Previous to this the ladies had retired, and Sir Raymond, as he had gone so far, thought it most prudent to confess the true state of his heart, and the affection he had long felt for Editha, and the request he had presented to the King, in Cornwall, in consequence of her supposed partiality to her cousin.

The Baron’s approbation of his addresses was not withheld; but he told him the success of his suit must depend entirely upon his daughter’s choice, whose decision, it was his determination, never, if possible, to oppose, but certainly, on no account, to influence.

Thus authorized, Sir Raymond did not long remain in doubt, but sought Editha,

and was happy to discover that he had not incurred her eternal displeasure by the avowal of his sentiments to Lord Clarendon.

During the time that Raymond had been entertaining Editha, Walter and Edgar had been rambling on the beach with Maude, who had not failed to take the earliest opportunity of acquainting them how dreadfully the Castle had been disturbed since their departure into Cornwall. Walter, who was some years older than his sister, very well remembered to have heard in his infancy much on the same subject, and Edgar said, he believed he had heard more about it than any of them, and, happening just then to meet Sir Raymond and his fair companion, they soon agreed to join company, and entered the Castle for the purpose of hearing the account, which Raymond agreed his brother was acquainted with ; and, being comfortably assembled round the fire, Edgar began his narrative.

“ My

“ My mother,” said he, “ was, in her youth, the intimate companion of the Baroness, then the Lady Gertrude Aumerle, for many years. Their friendship had been uninterrupted, when Lady Gertrude became the wife of our worthy host, the Lord Clarendon. Soon after her marriage, my mother, then Lady Eleanor Grey, observed an uncommon gloom to hang on the brow of the Baron ; and Lady Clarendon, though apparently less disturbed than her husband, had yet an appearance of gravity and uneasiness that greatly alarmed her friend. She saw her much less frequently than had been her custom ; but, as she never witnessed even the most trifling disagreement between her and the Baron, she forbore inquiring as to the cause of that alteration, of which she could not be an unconcerned observer. .

“ A short time after this, the family suddenly retired from the metropolis, and

Lady Eleanor was invited to visit at Clarendon. She gladly accepted the invitation, and, on her arrival about two months afterwards, was rejoiced to see Lady Clarendon appear much happier than she had for some time seen her. She said they did not propose ever again to return to the metropolis, but to make Clarendon their entire residence, and intimated the cause to have originated in some disagreement between the Baron and his brother, but the circumstances of which she was not at liberty to divulge.

“ The Baron was, as he ever is to his guests, perfectly polite and obliging to Lady Eleanor, and, except now and then that he seemed to suffer from some secret affliction, he was all that was agreeable. On such occasions he would generally order his horse, and, unattended, ride from the Castle, and continue absent some hours, or retire to his chamber, where he would frequently

frequently remain the whole day alone; but, on these occasions, the Baronefs did not exprefs any particular uneafinefs, more than wifhing poor Lovel (fo ſhe uſually called him) was happier.

“ Thus paſt upwards of two months, and Lady Eleanor, who had mentioned her intention of returning home, was prevailed on, by the earneſt entreaty of the Baron, to paſs her winter with them; and, as ſhe had no relations to induce her to quit them, ſhe readily acquieſced; beſides which, there might, perhaps, be another and more prevailing reaſon that induced her to continue at Clarendon. In conſequence of the change of ſeaſon, ſhe removed her apartments to that part of the Caſtle that immediately faces the north wing of the building.

“ One evening, after having taken leave of the Baronefs and retired for the night, finding herſelf but little diſpoſed to ſleep, ſhe

she dismissed her maids, and sat down to write to some friends whom she had too long neglected; for there was, in the neighbourhood of Clarendon, a gentleman, whose influence had assisted the Baron in detaining her, who was not, perhaps, very earnest in her wishes to depart.

“ She had not long been seated before the violence of the wind induced her to rise in order to fasten the casement, when, on her approach to the window, her attention was attracted by a light which beamed through the casements of the north gallery. She well knew these apartments had never been opened since her residence at the Castle, and curiosity impelled her to observe the motions of people whom she saw passing and repassing about the gallery.

“ She had not long stood in silent attention before she saw a door into the apartment open, and a person entered the chamber.

ber whom she was certain was the Baron of Clarendon. She saw him advance to a sofa on which lay a lady, who appeared ill; he embraced her with the greatest affection, seated himself by her, and they seemed to enter into earnest conversation. She frequently observed them both apply their handkerchiefs to their eyes, and both appeared mutually unhappy.

“ For above two hours she continued to observe the Baron and the unknown lady, when she determined, if possible, to find out how the Baroness was employed, for she did not doubt but the lady was a mistress, though she could not comprehend how the Baroness could be kept in ignorance of her being in the Castle. She descended gently to a lower casement, from whence she could observe the window of Lady Clarendon's apartment, but no light was there.

“ She

“ She was extremely perplexed at this incident, and knew not what to imagine: she could not suppose her friend would brook residing in the Castle with an improper person, and yet she strongly suspected the serious deportment she had sometimes noticed in her must have arisen from the unkindness of the Baron, or a knowledge of his attachment to this lady, which she was compelled not to reveal. In short, my mother painted the Baron, in her own mind, in the blackest colours; she, however, resolved to have one more look at the lady, but, alas! she was doomed to disappointment, for every light was gone, and silence reigned through every part of the Castle.

“ Scarcely could she be civil to the Baron the next morning when they met at breakfast; and, on observing the Baroness had been weeping, she did not doubt her knowledge of the scene she had witnessed.

“ The

“ The greatest part of the day the Baron was absent, except at dinner, where he appeared so excessively disturbed, that he scarcely knew what he was doing. At night my mother again betook herself to her post, and again she saw the Baron and the lady. For about a week things continued in the same train, and she determined to leave the Castle, but not on any account to disclose the discovery she had made.

“ Just as she had formed this resolution, she passed the door of the great hall, and, hearing some person talking, was going to look in, when, judge of her surprise, on beholding, at the feet of the Baroness, who was weeping, a young and handsome cavalier, who, in the height of gratitude and tears, was pouring forth his thanks for what he called his promised happiness. She staid to hear no more, but darted from the hall in silent indignation and amazement

ment. The cavalier she perfectly recollected to have seen often at the court, but never knew he was acquainted in the family of the Baron of Clarendon.

“ She instantly determined to delay her departure no longer than was absolutely necessary, and gave orders to prepare every thing with all possible dispatch. She now recollected the Baroness had frequently of late been closeted alone, and was become, within the last week or two, almost invisible. She almost feared her friends were equally involved in error; and, on the following morning, mentioned to Lady Clarendon her intention to take leave of her the next evening.

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